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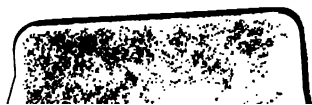
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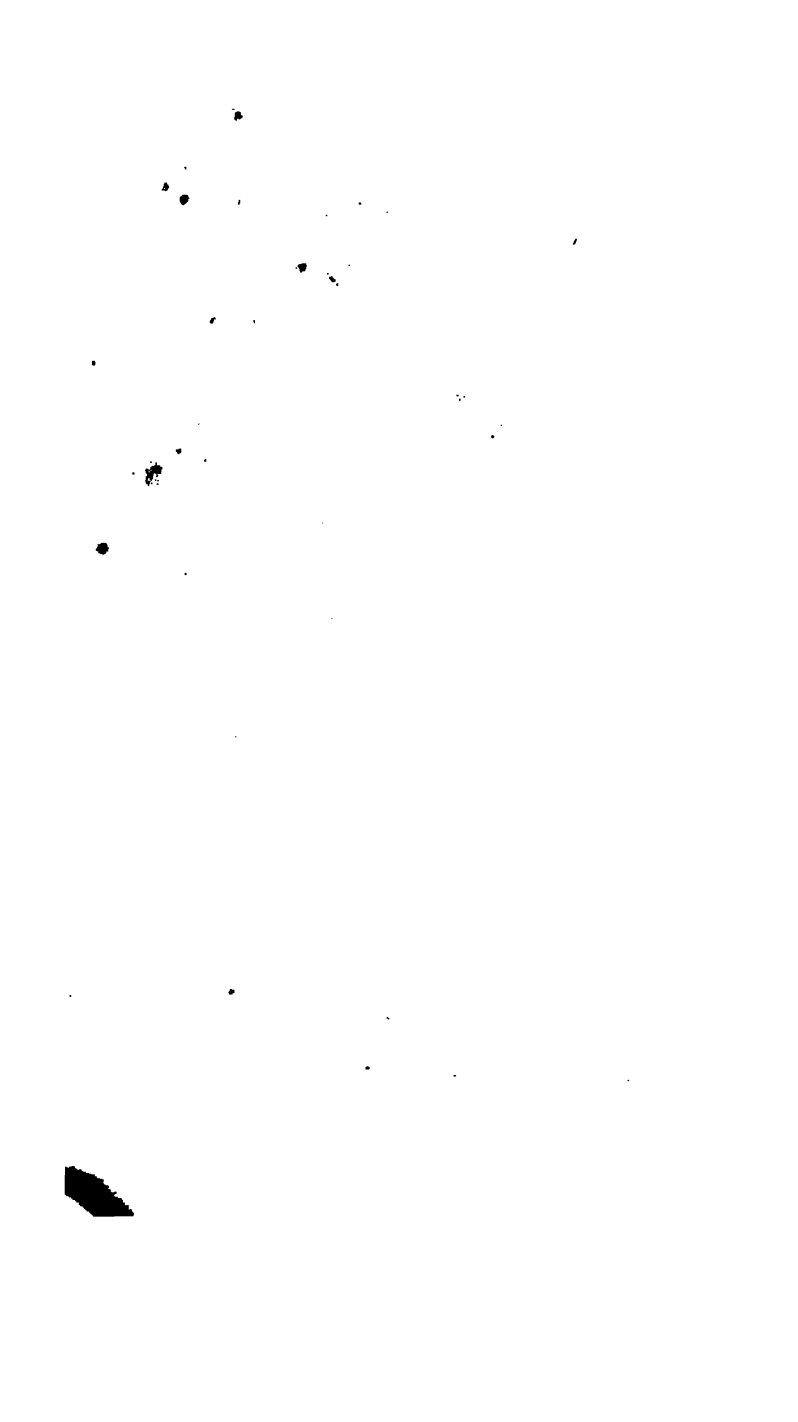


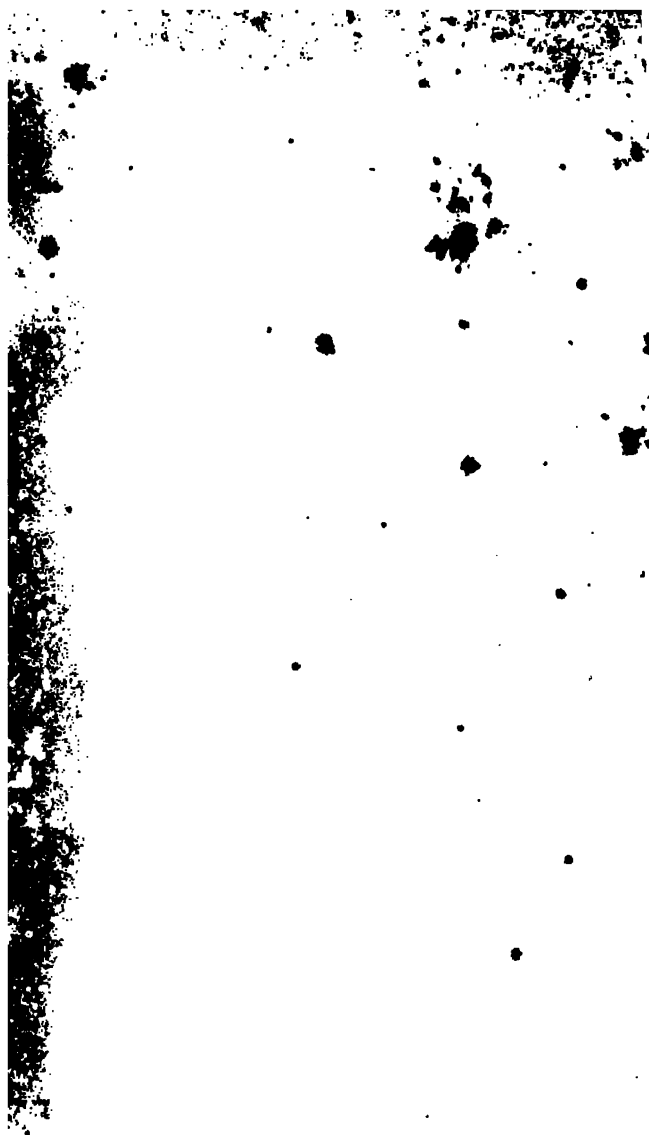
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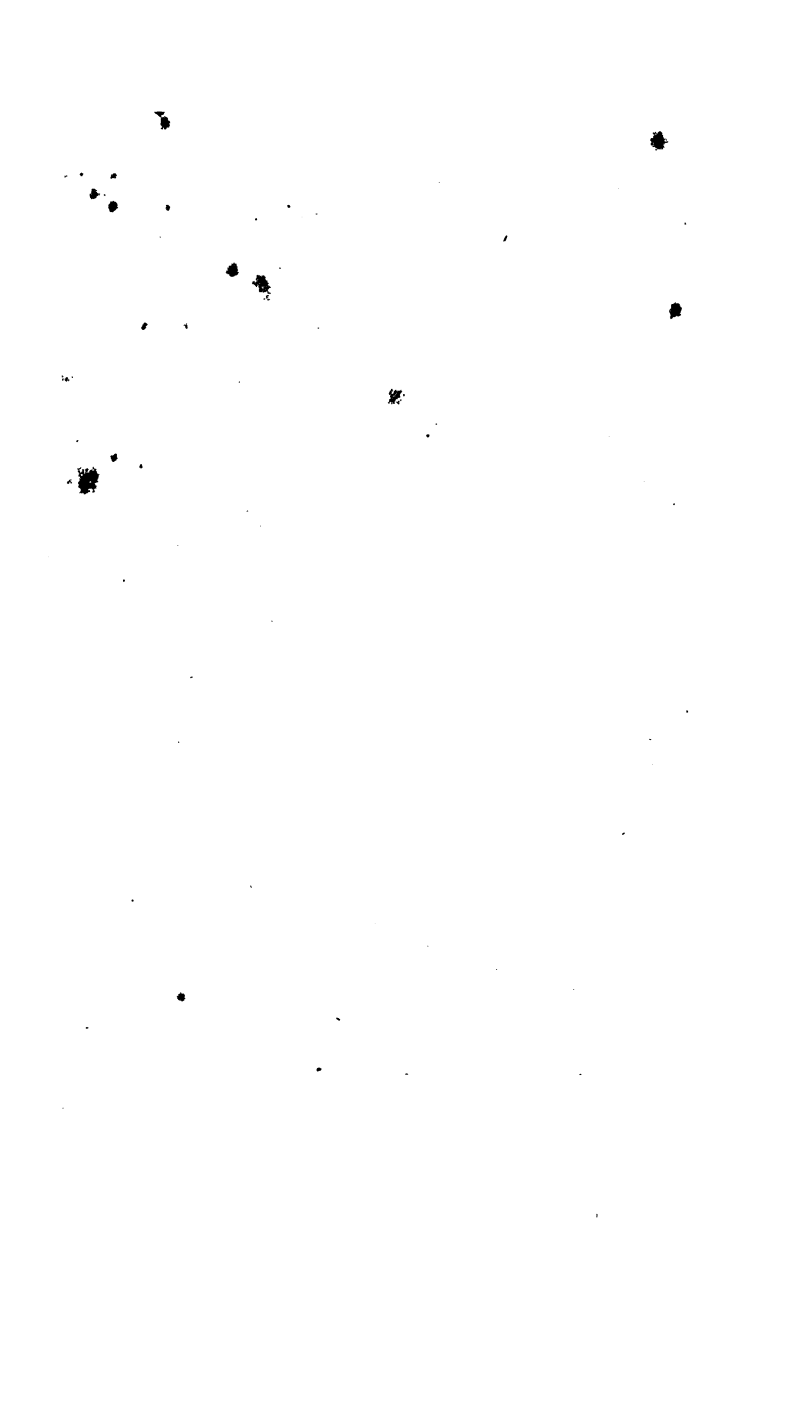


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T. NELSON AND SONS, LONDON AND EDINBURGH.



Stories from Russia



RETREAT FROM MOSCOW IN 1813.

Clouds of ravens, like the birds which are only seen at sea when a shipwreck is at hand, is-ued from the forests, and hovered over the dying remains of the soldiers —Page 210.

T. NELSON AND SONS, LONDON AND EDINBURGH.



STORIES FROM RUSSIA, SIBERIA

POLAND, AND CIRCASSIA.

Edited by Russell Lee,

AUTHOR OF "STORIES FROM SWITZERLAND AND THE TYROL."

BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED.



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PREFACE.

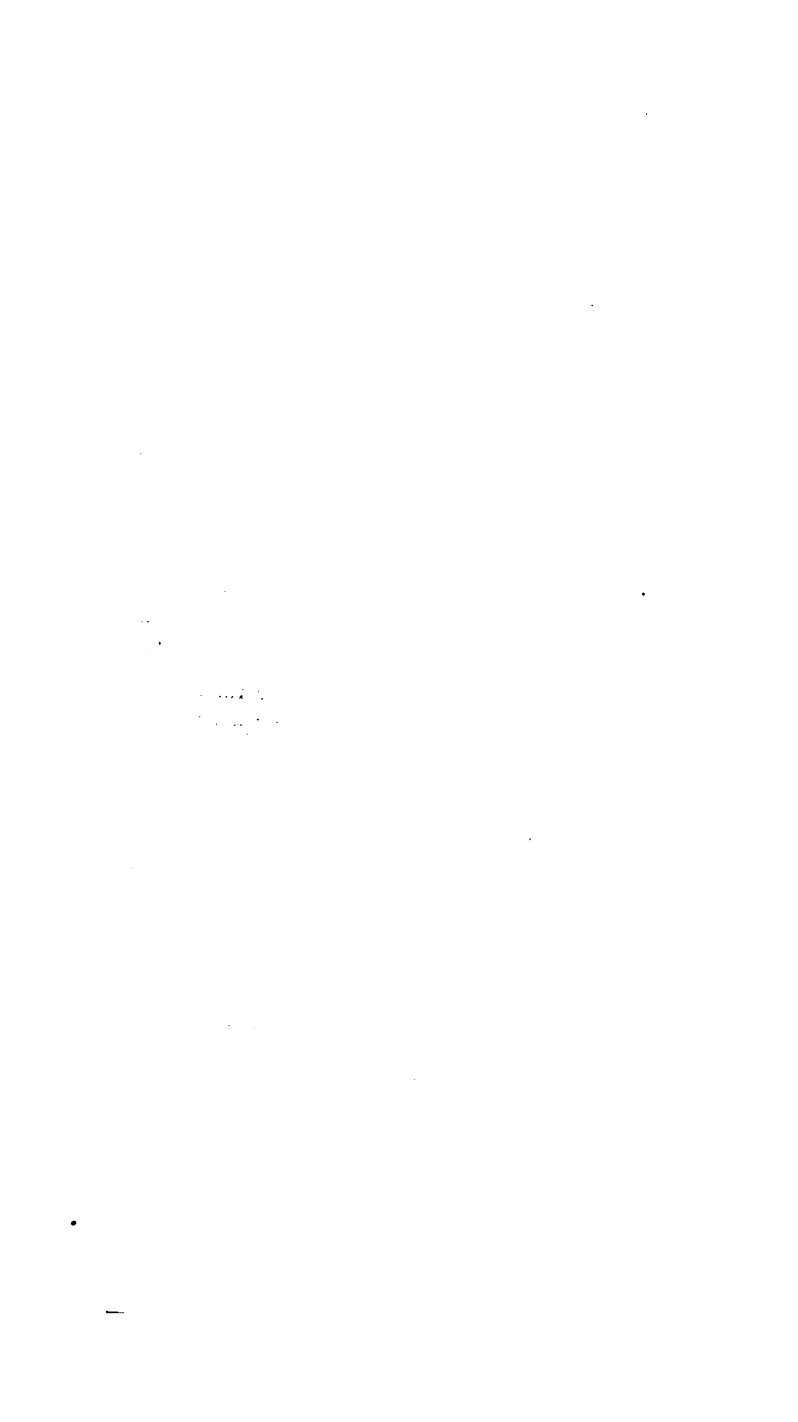
THE object of this volume is to present, in an attractive form, some of the most picturesque and striking passages in the history of Russia, and at the same time to give a general view of the manners and customs of a people whose habits and views differ so widely from our own.

It is meant to foster the laudable desire of amassing curious and instructive information regarding the people of other lands, at a time, moreover, when the attitude and designs of Russia and her ruler have attracted so much attention in connection with the peace of Europe.

The volume begins with an outline of the history of Peter the Great, whose influence and exertions afford a most interesting theme; and it closes with a narrative of the warfare in the Caucasus, embracing the most striking events that occurred during the period thus marked out in Russian history.

RUSSELL LEE.

LONDON, September 1853.



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NICOLAS I.
Emperor of Russia





STORIES FROM RUSSIA.

Part I.—The Muscovites.

CHAPTER I.

PETER THE GREAT.

PETER THE GREAT, the founder of the Russian Empire, one of the most extraordinary men that ever appeared in any age, by the sheer force of his own indomitable will, created a great nation out of scattered tribes of semi-civilized barbarians. It was, however, no slight element of his success, that the disparity between himself and his people was not so great as to preclude their hearty co-operation. He progressed with them, though ever in advance, and by this means carried them on in a way that a reformer fresh from the refinement of Paris would have failed to have done. Many anecdotes have been preserved illustrative of his character and proceedings, a few of which will suffice to show the peculiar energy, zeal;

and originality with which he accomplished the ends he had in view. In our own country's history, we are accustomed to trace out the struggles of the people for liberty, and their gradual advancement in civilization—sometimes under popular leaders, but not infrequently in direct opposition to their sovereigns and chiefs. Such is, undoubtedly, the true element of a nation's progress. In Russia, on the contrary, we see a single great man, by the sheer force of his genius, will, and indomitable energy, making his people civilized, great, and powerful, almost in spite of themselves. It cannot but be interesting to those whose free institutions have originated under a system so different from this, to investigate some of those incidents which marked the rise of the Russian Empire under its great Czar.

Alexis Michaelovitz, the father of Peter the Great, is not without some credit in the origination of the first steps which led to the partial civilization of the Muscovites. Under his reign, the first important manufactories of the country were established; several of the finest provinces of modern Russia, including Plescow and Smolensko, were added to his dominions, and various movements made towards legal and military reform. In the latter measures, his chief agents were Scottish officers of good rank, among whom Gordon, Leslie, and Dalziel, were the generals of his army. On their subsequent return to their native country, they gave evidences of the influence which Russian manners had had upon them, not

always to the satisfaction of their country. The last of them, especially, is still remembered in Scotland, by the unenviable title of "bloody Dalziel," in consequence of the unrelenting barbarity with which he employed himself in the persecution of the Covenanters, under the tyranny of Charles II. and his brother James II.

There can be no doubt that the Czar Alexis, laid the foundation of the measures afterwards carried out by his distinguished son. The Muscovites, however, were then a barbarous people, whose distinguished characteristics were chiefly of an Oriental cast, and who had an inveterate dislike to foreigners and to European institutions. He tried to establish silk and cotton manufactories by means of German and Italian workmen, but the prejudices of the native Russians sufficed to render all such schemes abortive. These exertions of the old Czar, however, served to accustom the people to the intrusion of foreigners, and the practice of their arts; and thus, in some degree, prepared the way for the more successful attempts of his son.

Peter the Great was only five years old when his father died, leaving two sons by a former marriage, with prior claims to his throne. From that time till he was seventeen years of age, his life passed on under many disadvantages, and exposed to frequent dangers. Little pains was taken to cultivate his understanding, and we accordingly learn that the ingenious and active boy found a ready outlet for his

restless energies in practising the mechanical arts. Thus occupied, he escaped the jealousy of those who were bent on supplanting him in the succession to the throne of the Czar, and by whom his life was more than once attempted. On his arrival at Zaandam, in Holland, he gave good evidence of the occupation of his earlier years, by his skill in handling the adze, plane, and lathe.

One of the grand purposes of Peter's life, on which he specially prided himself, was the origination of a Russian navy, and nothing more strikingly evinced the strong and original bent of his genius, than the fact that he formed his projects for the foundation of the Russian navy while still at Moscow; and limited both in his ideas and practical operations by the inland waters of the Moskva, which passes through Moscow, navigated only by unwieldy flat-bottomed boats. It chanced that a Dutchman of the name of Brandt, resident at Moscow, had built a small boat with a keel. Its construction attracted the eye of Peter as soon as he saw it, from its difference from any boats he had yet seen on the Moskva, and he immediately demanded an explanation from Timmerman, an officer under whom he was studying fortification. His reply was, that it was constructed in this manner, in order to sail against the wind. This was sufficient to awaken his liveliest curiosity; Brandt was immediately summoned to attend on him. With his aid, the boat was soon fitted with a mast, and rigging, and its sail set. Under his directions, the

young Czar learned to tack, and veer, and turn about his vessel, with the shifting breezes of the Moskva, to his great surprise and delight. Brandt was now employed to build a small yacht for him, the construction of which he watched with peculiar interest. A Dutch seaman was engaged to assist him in manœuvring his yacht, and, by degrees, he learned to navigate it as skilfully as his master. A whole fleet of such vessels was subsequently constructed under the same directions, and launched on the great Lake Peissus. This was the beginning of the operations perseveringly promoted by the Czar throughout his whole life, and to which the Russians owe their Baltic fleet, and their position among the maritime powers of Europe.

The anecdotes related of Peter the Great, in his intercourse with his court and attendants, give a curious insight into the manners of the barbarous people whom he undertook to civilize. It was customary for him to bestow personal chastisement, not only on his menials, but on his courtiers of the highest rank, and on his greatest ministers. His own temper was under little restraint, and in the paroxysms of his wrath, they were frequently condemned, on very slight provocation, to lose their heads, or to submit to the still crueller punishment of the knout. In this respect, indeed, his court in no degree differed from that of the most arbitrary Oriental despot; and his modes of selecting his favourites, and punishing those who offended him, equally partook to the

habits of the Eastern tribes, from whom the Muscovites trace their origin.

In one of the miserable villages on the banks of the Volga, a poor peasant family had brought up their son to perform such rustic labour as pertained to their humble sphere of life. When he was about the age of fourteen, he made his way to Moscow, and was taken into the service of a pastry-cook there. His daily occupation was to traverse the public streets, with a little basket of cakes and pies to sell. These he announced in a musical voice, and with a song of his own composing; and as his figure was good, and his features prepossessing, these, in addition to the good quality of his wares, soon made him a favourite. One day the pie-boy attracted the attention of the young Czar, who called for him, and made a proposition to purchase from him his basket with all its contents. The boy replied that it was his business to sell his pies, but as for the basket, he could not dispose of it without his master's leave. The firmness with which he maintained his ground on this point so pleased the Czar, that he proposed to him to enter his service; and he accordingly became his page. In this capacity he was brought into constant contact with the Czar, accompanied him in all his travels, and soon became a great favourite. He was employed on many secret and confidential missions, and executed them with such skill and secrecy that ere long he became an indispensable agent in the private affairs of his master. It need not, therefore,

surprise us to find that the poor peasant's son rose to wealth and distinction. His elevation, however, was a great deal more than this. Rarely, in the history of royal favourites, has anything equalled his sudden rise from the lowest state of poverty, to riches, honours, power, and magnificence. The poor pie-boy of Moscow became the chief mover, under Peter, in all the affairs of state; he was successively advanced to be a general and a governor, and at length attained to the rank of a prince of the empire. Few names are now better known throughout Europe, in connection with the history of Russia, than that of Prince Alexander Menzikoff, who began his career as the vender of pies for a pastry-cook of Moscow.

Peter the Great was only twenty-five years of age, when he formed the resolution of travelling through the chief countries of Europe, for the purpose of learning the art of government. Nothing could more clearly evince the greatness of his mind, than the promptness with which he recognised at so early an age, that amid all the pomp and absolute power of the court of Moscow, his kingdom and people were inferior in all essential points of true greatness to the foreigners who visited it from Germany, France, Holland, or England. He had meanwhile given practical evidence of his appreciation of such superiority, by selecting General Patrick Gordon, a Scottish gentleman whom he had raised to that rank, to command his guards, and secure his capital from insurrection or disturbance during his absence. He

was accordingly placed at the head of four thousand picked men, and he executed the trust imposed in him so ably, that there can be no question the Czar owed to him the safety of his government and the preservation of his whole family during his absence. After various adventures, Peter at length reached Amsterdam, dressed like a Dutch skipper, in a red jacket and white linen trousers. He procured lodgings for himself and his attendants suited to the humble condition which their appearance was designed to suggest, and the whole party represented themselves as Russian ship-carpenters in search of employment. They accordingly obtained access to the dockyards; but though the disguise of the Czar was soon penetrated, he continued to adhere to his costume and employment as an artisan, handling his tools with a dexterity which astonished the carpenters of Amsterdam. He had a great horror of a mob, and used to get into the most violent passion when surrounded by a gaping crowd of inquisitive strangers, but among the workmen of the dockyard he made himself on the most friendly footing of equality, and adhered to all the regulations by which his fellow-labourers were required to work. He entered himself as a ship-carpenter in the dockyard by the name of Peter Timmerman, and at his own request was familiarly addressed by all in the same way; while in Amsterdam, the only addition he would tolerate was that of Peter Baas, or Master Peter. He rose early, kindled his fire, and frequently cooked his own breakfast; and

when interrupted by visitors in the dockyard, he seemed always anxious to return to the work on which he had been employed. No kind of labour came amiss to him. He would lend a helping hand at rope-making, sail-making, smiths' work, or the pitching or coppering of a vessel. It is narrated that the Earl of Portland, having visited the yard on one occasion when at Zaandam, he had the Czar pointed out to him at work. It chanced just then that a number of the men were carrying a heavy beam of wood close by him, and one of them calling out: "Peter Timmerman, why don't you help?" he immediately threw down his tools, and placing his shoulder to the beam, helped to carry it to its destination, precisely as any other labourer in the yard might have been expected to obey such a summons.

No kind of knowledge was considered beneath the notice of the Czar. All sorts of manufactures, mills, stores, and workshops were inspected by him, and he was always eager to practise what he saw. He took a special delight in medicine and surgical skill, and carried his admiration of the latter so far as to occasionally become himself the operating surgeon, not always to the benefit of the objects of his amateur skill. "He frequented the markets," says the author of a *Memoir of the Life of Peter the Great*, "and was particularly amused with the mountebanks and vendors of quack medicines. It might be said he was somewhat of a quack himself; he learned to draw teeth, and became skilful by a little practice in that

operation. He attended dissections in the hospital, and learned to bleed; and these useful operations he followed with great zeal after his return to Russia, and practised them with advantage frequently among his workmen and in the army, particularly blood-letting. Stæhlin says he had acquired sufficient skill to dissect according to the rules of art, to bleed, draw teeth, and perform other operations as well as one of the faculty, that is to say, the Russian Faculty, among whom surgery may be supposed, at that time, to have been at a very low ebb. He tapped the wife of a Dutch merchant who had the dropsy, but the operation having been too long deferred, the poor woman died, as the regular practitioners said she would; and by way of consoling the husband for his loss, the Czar attended the funeral.

“Peter, it would seem, was ever ready to perform his good offices in the surgical way, and for that purpose always carried about with him a small case of surgical, as well as a case of mathematical instruments. Perceiving one day a valet of his, named Balboiarof, sitting with a sad and pensive countenance, he inquired what was the matter with him. ‘Nothing, sire,’ answered Balboiarof, ‘except that my wife has got the toothache and refuses to have it out.’ ‘Does she?’ says the Czar, ‘let me see her, and I warrant I’ll cure her.’ He made her sit down that he might examine her mouth, though the poor woman protested and insisted that nothing was the matter with her. ‘Ay,’ said the disconsolate

husband, 'so she always says that she suffers nothing while the doctor is present.' 'Well, well,' said the Czar, 'she shall not suffer long; do you hold her head and arms.' Peter caught hold of a tooth with the instrument, which he supposed to be the bad one, and drew it out with great expertness. A few days after this, Peter learned from some of the household, that the poor woman's tooth ailed nothing, and that the whole was a trick of the husband to be revenged on his wife for some supposed wrong. Peter was not to be trifled with; his own sagacity was impugned by drawing out a sound tooth, the poor woman was pained unnecessarily, and a trick was put upon him; he called his valet, and gave him a severe chastisement with his own hands."

The Czar's favour for surgery and its practitioners dates from an early period of his life. In his twentieth year, Stæhlin relates of him that he lived on a footing of familiarity, not only with the celebrated Le Fort, then his principal favourite, but with an old surgeon of much skill and gaiety, whose name was Tirmond. He wished to be constantly with him, kept him often up till the night was far advanced, and made him work as he did himself in the Hungarian vineyards. Tirmond, in short was in full possession of the good graces of the Czar. One day, when drunk, Tirmond fell into a rage with an old and faithful servant, and ran him through the body; the following day, feeling the stings of remorse, he went and threw himself at the feet of his master,

when the Czar refused to hear him till he rose; Tirmond persisting obstinately in his prostrate position, he raised him up, embraced him, and then consented to hear the accusation he came to prefer against himself. Peter, after he had concluded, bade him be composed and not afflict himself; telling him, "That it was from God alone he was to ask for pardon; and that as to the rest, if the deceased had left a wife or children, he would do well to take care of them."

Tirmond did this with great readiness, and secured to the widow a large annuity on his fortune.

This celebrated surgeon, though upwards of seventy when he died, left a widow neither old nor ugly, with an inheritance of several thousand rubles. During her husband's life, this woman had shown a disposition to levity, and after his death fixed her affections on a young man, a journeyman barber-surgeon of Dantzic. He had an agreeable person, but was infinitely less skilful in his profession than in the arts of seduction. Wedlock soon after joined their hands, and they abandoned themselves to the most excessive dissipation. They kept a coach and four, dressed magnificently, and by this change in their manner of living drew on themselves the eyes of all Moscow.

As soon as an opportunity offered, their conduct was communicated to the Czar, and additions were made little advantageous to the young Dantzic barber. One day, when his Majesty was at table

with a boyar whom he honoured with his friendship, he ordered the youthful successor of his favourite Tirmond to be brought before him.

The young man fancying it could be for no other purpose than to give him the appointment of his predecessor, dressed himself in haste in his richest clothes, stepped into his most elegant carriage, and drove in all his splendour to the house where the Czar was in the midst of a numerous company. Everybody ran to the window to witness this ridiculous exhibition.

When the journeyman barber-surgeon appeared in the monarch's presence, the prince interrogated him relative to different particulars of his art, and made him undergo the severest examination before the whole assembly. When he was well assured that he was no other than an ignorant and unworthy usurper of the place of his old surgeon Tirmond, he ordered a number of the boyar's footmen and peasants to be assembled in an adjoining room. The barber-surgeon, in all his finery, was directed to mow their stubborn beards, and then was permitted to return home with the same pomp as he came.

It may be easily believed that this adventure neither amused the insolent barber nor his beloved spouse; they soon after retired to Dantzic with the remains of their fortune, and passed some years there in profusion and jollity, till they had dissipated all they possessed. An old friend of Tirmond's met with them afterwards at the time of the Swedish war; they were in a most miserable situation; the

magnificent barber-surgeon had taken up the trade of a petty-broker, while the lady, for the sake of a little money, condescended to wash linen.

After a residence of nine months in Holland, during nearly the whole of which time the Czar had employed himself in acquiring a practical knowledge of ship-building and other mechanical arts, which he deemed the most likely to be of use to him in purposed reforms, he made preparations for his departure. During his residence in Holland, he received the gratifying intelligence of his army having obtained a victory over the Turks and Tartars in the neighbourhood of the Crimea, and also of a successful resistance of the galleys of the enemy by his own ships, in the vicinity of Azoph. On this news reaching Amsterdam, the ambassadors of the various European courts waited on Peter to present their congratulations to him on this important victory; and he celebrated it by giving a magnificent entertainment, to which they were invited, along with the officers of government and the chief merchants of Amsterdam. The French ambassador, however, took some offence at the policy of the Russian court in the election of the King of Poland; and having remained aloof during these civilities, the Czar took such offence at the slight, that he refused to visit France in the course of his travels. He accordingly proceeded to the Hague, and had an interview with William III., by whom it was arranged that three ships of war, and one of the royal yachts, should be sent over to Helvoetsluys in the early part

of the month of January, to convey the Czar and his suite to England.

In England the Czar pursued the same objects as he had done in Holland with like zeal. During his residence in London he experienced the full discomfort arising from the curiosity and rudeness of an English mob, as well as from the sturdy independence of the English character, which showed itself then as now, not unfrequently in acts of boorish hardihood. It is told of him, that walking on one occasion along the Strand in company with the Marquis of Carmarthen, a porter brushed rudely past them with a burden on his shoulders, jostling the Czar aside. His wrath was excited to the utmost pitch by this act, and he was ready to knock the offender down. The Marquis thereupon interfered, and demanded of him if he knew who it was that he had offended, and informed him that it was the Czar. The porter thereupon turned round, and giving a composed look at him, exclaimed with a grin : " The Czar ! we are all czars here." After a month's residence in London, he removed to the house of Evelyn, close to Deptford dockyard, and a doorway being broken through from it to the dockyard, he was able with still greater comfort than when in Holland, to pursue his observations on the operations of naval architecture. The celebrated Evelyn, well known as the author of the *Sylva*, had a garden attached to his house at Deptford, which had been an object of especial care with him ; but we can hardly be surprised to learn that its

beauties were little regarded by the practical Czar, who trundled his wheelbarrow right through the owner's favourite holly hedge, trod down his flower-beds, and left it, as Evelyn has described, a complete ruin. The greatest defect of the Muscovite Czar was his fondness for strong drinks. He indulged freely in these while in Holland; and he continued the same practice without the slightest thought of disguise when in England. His favourite amusement was rowing and yachting on the Thames with his suite; and the English government afforded him every facility that the royal dockyards could supply for his gratification. After a day spent in this manner, it was his custom to resort with his suite to a favourite public-house in Great Tower Street, close to Tower Hill, and there they smoked their pipes and drank beer and brandy, as freely as any skipper on the Thames. The landlord had Peter's head painted and put up as his sign, and the house which occupies the site still continues in use as a tavern, with its old sign of the Czar of Muscovy.

Some of the anecdotes told of the Czar while in England are sufficiently characteristic and amusing. The magnificence of Greenwich Hospital greatly attracted him; and it was not till he had had an opportunity of personally visiting it, and seeing the old pensioners accommodated in its wards, that he really believed it was not a royal palace. When dining one day at St. James's Palace, King William asked him how he liked his hospital for decayed seamen;

"Perfectly well," answered the Czar, "and if you were guided by my advice, you would remove there with your court, and convert this palace into the hospital!" He was much more surprised, however, on being taken to Westminster Hall, and eagerly asked who were all these busy people in black gowns and wigs. On its being explained to him that they were lawyers, he exclaimed with much astonishment, "Lawyers! why, I have only two in my whole dominions, and I think of hanging one of them the moment I get home!"

So great was the dislike of Peter to be the object of observation, that when invited to a grand ball at St. James's, instead of joining the assembly, he betook himself to a small room, where he could see without being seen; and in the same way he witnessed the proceedings of the Houses of Lords and Commons from recesses and windows, where he was not himself liable to observation.

Peter was a great favourite with William III., whom he looked up to with much respect, frequently consulting with him on important occasions. His manners must have been extremely rude and uncouth, and his habits of drinking such as must have prevented his better qualities from being recognised by those who merely saw him in hours of social relaxation. Bishop Burnet, to whose care and attention he was recommended by the king, has, accordingly, described him as "a man of very hot temper, soon influenced, and very brutal in his passion; he

raises his natural heat by drinking much brandy, which he rectifies himself with great application." On leaving England he entered into engagements with various artificers and scientific men to proceed to Russia, and promised them much more liberal terms than he afterwards could be induced to pay.

We shall form a more accurate opinion of the true greatness of Peter, and the immense progress he had made in advance of his age by the sheer force of his superior genius, if we contrast his proceedings with those of Golownin, a favourite of the Czar, whom he despatched to Venice at the same time as he proceeded to Amsterdam, with special instructions to make himself acquainted with their naval tactics, the construction of their galleys, and with the Italian language. This sagacious deputy, who, during a residence of four years at Venice, was supposed by the Czar to be as diligently employed as himself in acquiring a practical mastery of all the most valuable fruits of Italian civilization, is said never to have quitted his room, that he might not have to reproach himself with seeing any other country than his own, as that was considered by the Muscovite priests to be an abomination. When he returned to Russia, Peter took him to Veronitz, that he might there judge of the progress he had made, but he speedily discovered that he knew nothing whatever of naval architecture. The Czar good-naturedly observed to his favourite that he supposed he had spent his time at Venice in studying the language and literature.

No, he replied, he knew nothing of these either! "Then what in the world have you been doing," demanded the Czar, "during your four years' residence abroad?" "Sire," replied he very complacently, "I smoked my pipe, I drank brandy, and very rarely stirred out of my room." Peter, half angry, ordered him out of his sight, telling him that he was only fit to be made one of his fools! What indeed could he do, or hope to effect, when such were the tools with which he had to work. Yet even with such as these how much did he accomplish! But we shall now view him in a different character.

Peter the Great, in the course of his journey to Holland in 1716, arrived at Dantzic on a Sunday, as the gates of the city were about to be shut. He made his way to his inn, scarcely meeting a single person. His surprise was great at finding the streets of so populous a town thus deserted, and as soon as he had alighted he asked his landlord the reason.

He learned that it was the hour of divine service; that all the inhabitants were at church; and that it was customary to keep the gates of the city shut during the time of service. The Czar did not wish to lose an opportunity of seeing the form of worship at Dantzic, and begged the landlord to conduct him to church. The reigning burgomaster was there, and, in all likelihood, had already received notice of his arrival, for, as soon as the Czar entered the church, he rose up to meet him, and conducted him to the burgomaster's seat, which was a little more elevated

than the rest. The Czar sat down bareheaded, made the burgomaster sit beside him, and listened to the preacher with the greatest attention, keeping his eyes constantly turned towards the pulpit, while those of all the congregation were fixed upon himself.

A few moments after, feeling his head grow cold, he took the ample periwig which covered that of the burgomaster, without saying a word, and put it on his own. The bareheaded burgomaster, and Peter in his gala wig, continued to attend to the sermon without emotion; and when it was finished, the Czar, restoring what he had borrowed, thanked the burgomaster by an inclination of his head. This little incident seemed quite a thing of course with the Russian monarch, who was accustomed to it; but it is easy to conceive how singular it must have appeared to the Dantzickers. When the service was over, the magistracy deputed a quorum of its members to compliment the Prince. They were told by a Russian nobleman that he was very well satisfied with what he had seen. He added, that the removal of the burgomaster's wig was a trifle which ought not to astonish them; that the Emperor never paid any attention to such little matters; and that, as his hair was thin, it was his custom, as often as he felt his head cold at church, to take the wig off Prince Mentichoff, or that of any other nobleman who happened to be within his reach.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDING OF ST. PETERSBURG.

No work which has been carried on in Europe since the fall of the Western Empire, can bear any comparison to the founding and building of the great capital of Russia. It was such an undertaking as only a despotic ruler could accomplish; and, as usual in such works, it was carried on with the utmost indifference to the sacrifice of human life. At the same time, the vast difficulties which he had the boldness to encounter, in anticipating the conversion of so unpromising a site into the imperial capital, strikingly illustrates the character of the man. The site chosen by him was a low swamp, where the River Neva divided itself into four or five branches, forming a flat delta of swampy islands, and occupied by the wretched huts of some few fishermen. Peter took up his lodging in a small wooden house, erected for himself, and which is still preserved.

The whole surrounding country was a morass, in which not a stone of any description could be found. As in the case of the wretched fellahs of Egypt employed by Ali Pacha on his great public works, Captain Perry relates that the labourers driven to the works at St. Petersburg had neither pickaxes, spades, shovels, planks, nor barrows. The earth was carried in the skirts of their clothes, or in bags made

of rags and old mats. These workmen consisted of many thousands of Russians, Cossacks, Tartars, Calmucks, Findlanders, and Ingrians, collected together from all parts of the empire, and not only exposed to the inclemency of the weather in a very cold climate, but so poorly and irregularly provided for, that they were frequently without food for a day or two together. When the works of such despotic governments are compared with those of a free and civilized country like our own, we are too apt to overlook such facts, and to forget that the wages of a single skilled workman in England would have furnished a score of them to the Russian Czar. The accumulation of such a multitude on a single spot was of itself sufficient to originate a town. Officers had to be appointed to superintend them. Guards were sent to control and protect them, and engineers to direct the requisite operations. For all these, houses had to be provided. It is not, therefore, surprising, that in a single year the chosen site of the new capital contained houses and huts of one description or another, amounting to thirty thousand in number. It was such a compulsory origination of a great capital, in obedience to the will of a single individual, as could take place only under a despotic government, and would, indeed, be a source of shame rather than of boasting, if it had taken place in a free country such as ours. We must remember, however, that with a people in the condition in which the Russians were at this period, nothing but the sheer

force of such a despotic will, guided by principles in advance of the age, could carry them forward; nor must we greatly wonder to find the elements of despotic government influencing the movements destined ultimately, as we may believe, to supplant it by free institutions.

The first building erected at St. Petersburg was the Citadel, which was completed in five months. Peter then commanded a church to be built, and ordered the requisite number of priests for the service to be sent from Moscow without delay. In like manner, he issued his orders for merchants and tradespeople to repair thither, and exercise their various trades and professions; and by this means, a want was no sooner felt in the absence of any practice of the useful arts, than the summary order of the Czar brought thither the most qualified man that chanced to be known to him or his agents. Hotels were built for the Russian officers of state, and for the accommodation of foreign ministers. The inferior officers, merchants, and artisans, each required their dwellings, warehouses, and workshops; all of which were rapidly constructed of wood; and thus, at the mere will of the Czar, St. Petersburg rapidly assumed the aspect of a large and flourishing city. All this state of things, however, was not brought about without much opposition and angry feeling. The tradesmen and mechanics, who had been forced from their own homes in Moscow, and other warm latitudes, and compelled to take up their abode among the

swampy islands of the Neva, were specially indignant. Many of them had the evils incidental to such a position greatly aggravated by disease and privation, and their clamours were largely fostered by the influence of the clergy. Under very rare circumstances, indeed, do we find the clergy of any country taking a willing part in movements involving great changes; and those of Russia, as we have already seen, were peculiarly disinclined to any imitation of foreign arts or manners. Stæhlin relates the following anecdote, which shows at once the artifices resorted to by the priests to increase the popular clamour against the Czar's plans, and his mode of dealing with their priestcraft:—

“Malice and folly had exhausted their shafts, and Peter, triumphing over all the obstacles which had opposed the foundation of Petersburg, had already built some hundreds of houses in the different islands on which it stands, as well within as without the fortifications, with a great number of public buildings, such as shops, warehouses, and colleges; when one day that he was absent on a visit to the works carrying on at the canal of Ladoga, at a day's journey from Petersburg, the people were seen on a sudden crowding towards a church situated close to the new town, in consequence of a report that the image of the Virgin Mary had shed tears. This pretended miracle made the people believe that the Virgin was sorry to be obliged to stay in that part of the world; that her tears could have no other cause but to threaten the

new establishment, and indeed the whole country, with some great convulsion.

Count Goloffkin, then high chancellor, who lived near the church, repaired thither; but the crowd was so great, that it was not without much difficulty he got out again, and it cost him still more to disperse the people. He immediately sent a courier to Peter, to inform him of this event, and of the murmurs of the populace. The Czar set off instantly, travelled all night, and the next day before noon appeared suddenly at Petersburg. He went directly to the church, where he was received by the priests, and conducted to the miraculous image.

The Czar, it is true, did not perceive any tears; but several spectators informed him that they had often seen them, and that in a few days the same thing would inevitably happen again. He looked at the image a second time with much attention, and perceiving something in the eyes that seemed suspicious, he resolved to make it undergo the most scrupulous examination. Dissembling the impression this discovery had made on him, he ordered one of the priests who was present, to take down the holy image from the elevated place it was in, and to bring it to his palace. There, in presence of the high chancellor, the principal noblemen of the court, the most distinguished of the clergy, and the priests who had been present when the image was taken down, and had brought it thither, the clear-sighted Czar began anew to scrutinize all its parts, which

were entirely covered with paint, and a very thick varnish.

He soon found some very small holes in the corners of the eyes, which the shade produced by the hollow that terminated them, rendered almost imperceptible. He turned the image round, took away the upper part of the frame, stripped off with his own hands the second cloth that covered it behind, and then discovering the source of the image's fallacious tears, enjoyed the pleasure of seeing his suspicions realized. There was a little cavity near the eyes hollowed out in the plank, still containing several drops of oil, and covered over with a kind of lining. 'Here is the treasure!' cried Peter: 'here is the source of the miraculous tears!' He then made all present draw near, that he might give more authenticity to his discovery, and they might convince themselves of the artifice and imposture that had been practised.

To give them an idea of this piece of mechanism, he told them it was natural for the congealed oil to continue without running in a cool place till its fluidity was restored by heat; that he had shown them the holes at the corners of the eyes through which it filtered in the shape of tears, which necessarily happened as often as the flame of the tapers placed before the image was near enough to heat the surrounding air."

The priests were dismissed with injunctions which they dared not trifle with, to disabuse the public of the cheat they had practised upon them, and the

impostor by whom the miraculous image had been devised, was subjected to such severe punishment as was well calculated to strike terror into the whole body of the clergy.


Grand as were the schemes which Peter had in view for establishing a Russian navy, and instituting commercial intercourse with foreign countries, it may be questioned if he had any adequate conception of the great results which were to flow from the transference of the capital to a branch of the Baltic, and within the reach of the most civilized countries of Europe. By this single change, he more effectually broke through the peculiar national habits and customs which interfered with their civilization, than could have been effected by any other means. Previous to this change, the situation of the Russian capital, in the centre of its vast dominions, and with its chief intercourse maintained by means of the Volga and its tributaries with Asia, the manners of the people bore little resemblance to those of Western Europe. Marriages were effected as they are still done in Asiatic nations, and the social condition of woman was similar to what now prevails among the Mohammedan countries of the East. The new capital, at the head of the Gulf of Finland, broke through all the old feudal customs and rude Oriental magnificence which had pertained to the nobility at Moscow. Their independence was also shaken, and they were made more subject to the sovereign will; while they were forced into some imitation of the more polished

manners of the civilized nations of the West, with whom they were thus brought in contact. Still more effectually to accomplish this, the Czar addressed a ukase to all his ambassadors, residents, and *chargés d'affaires*, at foreign courts, commanding them to make known that all foreigners would be welcome to Russia, and would enjoy special protection and great privileges on settling there. He also took every means for securing them a good reception; and not only ordered them to receive every necessary facility, but even extended large pecuniary assistance to skillful engineers, shipbuilders, manufacturers, and artists, to tempt them to take up their permanent abode with him. Hence it was, that a multitude of foreigners arrived from all countries of Europe, and settled in the new capital, giving it at once the character and manners which he had admired when visiting Amsterdam and London.

The city of Amsterdam was unquestionably the model that Peter had in view when he planned St. Petersburg; and the similarity of the swampy ground on which it is built, to the site of the Dutch capital, rendered the services of the architects, masons, and various artisans, whom he brought from Holland, of peculiar value to him in his great undertaking. As his grand object also was to command a port which should secure a constant intercourse with the chief seaports of Europe, it was an additional inducement to him thus to establish relationships with them by having their own citizens settled in his capital. When Peter

was employed in building his fleet at Veronitz, on the Don, and remote even from the Sea of Asoph, with which it alone communicated, his Scottish general, Patrick Gordon, one day asked him : " Of what use do you expect all the vessels you are building to be, when you have no seaports ? " " My vessels shall make ports for themselves," replied Peter, with prompt determination ; and he took effectual means for fulfilling his proud boast.

The rapid progress of St. Petersburg, and the speedy realization of the cherished desires of the Czar, are among the most marvellous occurrences in the history of modern Europe. Five months had scarcely elapsed from the laying of the first stone of his new capital, when the joyful news was brought to him, that a large ship, under Dutch colours, was entering the port. Scarcely any news could have been more welcome. He hastened to welcome the stranger in person, and gave orders to his minister, Menzikoff, to invite the skipper and his officers to his palace, and prepared a suitable entertainment for them. Thither accordingly they repaired, and when the skipper took his appointed seat at table, he found to his surprise, that he was seated next to the Czar, who helped him with his own hands, and treated him as if he had been a crown prince. The Czar himself was no less astonished than delighted on recognising in his guest his old Zaandam friend, Cornelius Calf, with whom he had resided during the greater part of his residence in



Holland. The cargo consisted of wine, cheese, hams, salt, and other well-selected articles of provision peculiarly acceptable to the inhabitants of the new city. Permission was given to land the whole free of duty; they were immediately purchased at a large profit; in addition to which, the Czar sent to the skipper, at his departure, a present of five hundred ducats, and to each of his crew, one hundred rix-dollars, as a reward to the first ship that had entered the port of St. Petersburg. Two other ships, one of which was an English one, entered the port the same year, and met with a similar encouraging welcome.

Some curious accounts are preserved of the unpretending and homely courtesies, by means of which the Czar continued to encourage foreign vessels to resort to his new capital. Stæhlin remarks, "that as soon as any ship arrived at St. Petersburg, the Czar seldom failed to repair on board, to examine its structure, and observe any particular that was new. Such was his constant custom, at least in regard to the Dutch vessels which made this voyage annually. The monarch did not scruple to accept a glass of wine, or even of brandy, with biscuit and cheese, from the captains, and conversed with them concerning their passage, especially through the Baltic. He was much pleased to hear, and avail himself of their observations, and often carried the conversation on this matter very far. In return, he allowed them to come to court as often as they pleased, and to be

present, without reserve, at his entertainments. In general, indeed, they partook of them, and seldom returned without showing symptoms of the freedom with which his butler did the duties of the table. It is easy to conceive how much this reception was to the taste of people in that line of life, and with how much pleasure they steered their course for St. Petersburg. As the Czar indulged them in the greatest familiarity, his officers did not dare to treat them with less consideration, and were not backward in expediting their business in a satisfactory manner. For their parts, they were so sensible of their advantages, that whenever anything was not done to their satisfaction, they threatened to make their complaint to the Emperor. It was well known that he gave them free access to his person, and the promptitude with which he did them justice had been evinced on more than one occasion. In short, all who came under the description of seamen, more especially the Dutch, who were by far the most numerous, were on a footing of the greatest familiarity with the Czar. It may even be said that they sometimes abused his indulgence, and carried their freedom beyond all bounds. But the monarch, who was no stranger to their character, and bore with them for more reasons than one, took all in good part, and was much diverted by their sallies.

One day he met in the walks of his palace the master of a Dutch vessel newly arrived, who had often made the voyage to Archangel at the time

that port was the centre of Russian commerce, and had now made that of St. Petersburg for the second time. 'Well,' said the Czar, 'do not you like this place better than Archangel? and will you not in future undertake this voyage with as much pleasure as the other?' 'Not altogether,' answered the captain, without reflecting on what he said. Peter, who expected a very different answer, was a little disconcerted, and, with rather an angry look, asked him his reason. The sensible mariner immediately perceived that this was not the way to pay his court; 'I beg your Majesty's pardon,' replied he; 'but at Archangel we were regaled with excellent pancakes, and none are to be had here.' 'Well, captain,' said the emperor, with a laugh, and in his own jargon, 'is that all? Come and see me to-morrow at court, with all your countrymen, and you will then know if my pancakes are not as good as those of Archangel.'

When the Czar returned, he sent for Felton, his chief cook, and ordered him to prepare on the following day a plentiful collation of good pancakes in the Dutch way, with everything else that was necessary. He afterwards invited all the Dutchmen to his summer palace to spend the evening, where they were regaled in the garden with everything they could desire, in his Majesty's presence, who dismissed them at break of day in high spirits, and perfectly well satisfied."

The same politic deference to the habits and in-

clinations of others, was extended by the Czar to his own subjects, when he had any special purpose in view. There even appears an amount of unostentatious simplicity and homeliness in his mode of securing the good will of his people, which must be considered to furnish the best proof of that singular practical sagacity which contributed so largely to the success of his well-devised schemes. While he embellished St. Petersburg with many handsome public structures, he employed all possible means to encourage Russians and foreigners to build houses in the city and its environs, testifying his pleasure at their doing so, as if they had conferred a personal favour on him.

“Whoever was desirous of building, and begged him to lay the first stone of the edifice, was sure of his request being granted. On these occasions he wished everything to be conducted with the customary ceremonies, and drank to the success of the undertaking, and to the prosperity of the master.

This conduct excited so much exultation, that the alacrity with which a great number of houses were erected would never have happened without it.

He suffered suburbs to be built at some distance from the Neva, on a spot of ground watered by several small branches of the river. These suburbs, called Great and Little Colonna, consist of several streets, and were intended for the abode of the sailors, ship-carpenters, and other people belonging to the admiralty, who still make them their residence.

A little farther off, below the mouth of the river, the emperor chose a situation for the erection of a country house for the Empress, which he called Catherinen Hoff (Catherine's House). It was built of wood, in the Dutch manner, but with stone foundations. It was situated in the middle of a very pleasant little wood, in the neighbourhood of a small canal, which afforded a passage to boats from the mouth of the Neva.

He likewise built two very pretty habitations, called Anna Hoff and Elizabeth's Hoff, after the two princesses, his daughters, at some wersts' distance, on the banks of the gulf, where there are several small islands, and a delightful prospect.

The Empress wished to make a return for the attention of her husband, and to give him at the same time the pleasure of a surprise, by erecting, without his knowledge, a building in the vicinity of Petersburg. For this purpose, she pitched upon a very pleasant site, at the distance of about twenty-five wersts south-west of the city, and situated at the end of an immense plain, which afforded a most beautiful prospect to the eye. The only place near it was a village called Saraskoi Muisa (the village of Sarah), the name of a noble lady of Ingria, to whom it belonged.

On this spot Catherine built a large house, and laid out a beautiful garden, with arbours, and an avenue of linden trees. The edifice was raised in so short a time, and with so much secrecy, that the Czar had

not the least intimation of the matter. During his two years absence the works were carried on with such expedition, that it was finished and fitted up in the most complete and brilliant manner.

In the summer of the following year, he came from his army in Poland to Petersburg, and expressed much satisfaction to the Empress on seeing the improvements made in the city during his absence.

‘I have found,’ said she to the Czar, ‘a charming situation, salubrious, solitary, and not far distant from hence, where your Majesty, perhaps, would not dislike to build a country house—if you would but take the trouble to go and see it.’

‘With all my heart,’ replied the Czar, highly pleased to see the Empress so desirous to improve the environs of Petersburg, ‘and I promise to satisfy your wishes, if the place really answers your description.’

‘I hope,’ replied she, ‘it will please you; it is at some wersts’ distance, on the side of the Moscow road, and commands a most beautiful prospect. If it has remained in a desert state till now, it is because the canton is unfrequented, and but little known.’

Peter the Great, impatient to see so delightful a place, gave Catherine his hand, and promised to attend her on the following day.

The Empress immediately gave secret orders to make such preparations at the country house, during the night, as were necessary to give the Czar a suitable reception.

The following day, in the forenoon, they set off for this supposed solitude, attended by a number of sea and land officers, and by a few noblemen high in favour with their Majesties. They were likewise accompanied by a waggon, loaded with provisions, and a tent, under which they purposed taking a hasty repast.

At about twelve wersts' distance from Petersburg, they turned aside from the Moscow road into one which was cut with much care through a wood, and which afforded a view in a straight line as far as the mountain of Duderhof. This attracted the Czar's whole attention. 'The country,' said he with a smile of satisfaction, 'whither my Catherine is conducting us, must be very fine, for the road that leads to it is excellent.'

At the foot of the mountain the road turns to the left, and continues to rise and descend alternately with a gentle declivity, so that the place whither they were going did not make its appearance till they reached a particularly elevated spot. Then, all at once, the Czar perceived a very handsome stone building, in a place to which he was a perfect stranger. He was still lost in astonishment, when he was received by the Czarina as mistress of the house; 'this,' said she, 'is the solitude of which I have spoken to your Majesty, and the country house I have built for my sovereign.'

The Czar, on hearing this, embraced her with the utmost tenderness: 'Never,' said he in a transport of

joy, 'has my Catherine deceived me, or given me false accounts. The situation is charming, and the pains you have taken to surprise me so agreeably, entitles you to my warmest acknowledgments. I see that you wish to show me that there are beautiful places about Petersburg, which, though they do not abound in water, are not unworthy such edifices as this.'

The Empress led the Czar through all the apartments, and showed him from the windows the beauty of the prospect. She then conducted him into a large room, where he found a well-served table.

At dinner the Czar drank the first glass of wine to the health of his good landlady, and gave much praise to her taste in architecture. The Czarina, in her turn, drank his health, as master of the house; but how great was his surprise when he heard a salute of eleven guns the instant she put the glass to her lips!

After the repast, which lasted till the evening, he took a walk in the gardens, saw all the buildings belonging to the palace, and on quitting this delightful situation, said he never recollected to have spent so pleasant a day." Such was the imperial child's-play with which the Czar and Czarina sought to surprise one another with a favourite toy.

CHAPTER III.

PETER THE GREAT AND HIS COURTIER'S.

THE contempt manifested by Peter the Great for all the formalities and useless ceremonies of a court continued with him through life, and the rude state in which his people were, is sufficiently apparent from the liberties he was accustomed to take with his nobles and most distinguished favourites. Nothing was more common for him to do, when his anger was excited, than to inflict personal chastisement on his ministers; nor did he trouble himself with any nicety in making his selection of the objects of such singular assaults.

M. Stæhlin, who narrates the anecdotes he has collected concerning the great founder of the Russian empire, with such courtly language and glose as he conceived best fitted to gratify the members of the royal family at St. Petersburg, remarks:—"The Czar loved to have justice speedily executed; nothing displeased him so much as the tardiness with which affairs are conducted in Germany, and he carefully avoided this inconvenience in his own administration, and in all that related to his servants. If any one of them misbehaved, through petulance, giddiness, or libertinism, he punished him on the spot, with his cane or a rope's end, in such a way that the culprit remembered for hours after the celerity of his justice.

He happened one day, in a hasty moment, to punish without cause a person who took an opportunity to demonstrate his innocence. 'I am sorry for it,' answered the equitable Czar, 'but I will remember it, and pardon you the first time you merit chastisement.'

Among a number of anecdotes of this kind, I shall select one that relates to a young negro, who served him as page:—

The Emperor being on board a yacht in the Gulf of Finland, was becalmed between Cronstadt and Petersburg, and obliged to pass the whole day there. After dinner he retired to his cabin to sleep, as was his custom in the afternoon. Some of his attendants playing afterwards on deck made a noise and waked him. As soon, however, as they heard him moving they hid themselves for fear of chastisement, and when the Czar came out with a cord in his hand he found nobody but a poor little negro sitting quietly on the staircase. He took him by the collar and gave him a severe flogging, saying no more than this, 'Learn to be quiet, and not wake me when I sleep.' He then returned to his repose, while the negro continued to weep bitterly for having been punished without deserving it.

The Baron of Lubras, captain of engineers, Lestocq, the Czar's surgeon, and two Russian officers of the navy, who had made the noise, came softly out of their hiding-places, and threatened him with a fresh correction if he would not be silent. He, however,

officers of the imperial court, that they referred to such personal chastisements more composedly than an English gentleman might recall the hasty word of his sovereign, uttered under some momentary provocation. To Peter the Great the Russians owe their partial elevation out of so barbarous a condition ; and we must not forget that he was all the better fitted to become their reformer because of his own equality in origin with them, and his indifference to the want of refinement and true nobility of feeling which such a state of things gives evidence of. When we remember that the Czar was a man of nearly gigantic proportions, measuring about six feet seven inches in height, and of proportionate muscular strength ; and consider, moreover, that he was liable to fits of ungovernable passion, which his whole course of education had tended to increase rather than to control, we may readily conceive that such unseemly assaults were no less painful than degrading. They sufficed, however, as a ready exponent of the hasty anger of the Czar, and left apparently as little impression afterwards, on either party, as in the case of a whipped spaniel.

Count Desiere was, in his youth, a special favourite of Peter the Great, and his life furnishes a curious illustration of the precarious tenure by which favour, rank, and even personal liberty, were held under the despotic sway of the Czar and his successors. The Count served in the capacity of *denchtchick*, or minister of police, for a number of years, and is the same

person who, in the reign of Catherine the First, was disgraced by his own brother-in-law, Prince Menchicoff, was afterwards banished to Siberia, and recalled, at the expiration of fifteen years, by the Empress Elizabeth. After having been denchtchick of Peter the Great, he obtained the command of a regiment, was promoted to the rank of major-general, and lieutenant-general, and was at last appointed lieutenant-general of the police, which post he held till his exile. The Czar kept so attentive an eye over all that came under the jurisdiction of the police, and it was so difficult for anything to escape his observation, that it was absolutely necessary for the lieutenant-general to be himself very watchful in his department.

One day the Czar, according to custom, went in a carriage towards the admiralty, driving by the side of the Canal of Morika, with Lieutenant-General Desiere in his company. They proceeded as far as the island called New Holland, to the magazines of ship timber. Here they were obliged to pass a little bridge over a canal, which goes from the farm of Golowin to the River Morika. The planks happened to be loose, and so much deranged as to make it dangerous to pass the bridge. The Czar was obliged to alight, while his denchtchicks put the planks in order, and fastened them so as to enable him to pass over.

During the work he could not avoid expressing his displeasure at the want of attention shown by the police in the preservation of the roads and bridges ;

and as the lieutenant-general himself happened to be there to receive his just reproaches, he administered a sound caning on the spot, as a punishment of his negligence. "This will make you more attentive," said he, as he was leaving off, "and teach you to take your rounds, and see if everything be safe, and in good condition." The bridge by this time being repaired, and the Czar's anger at an end, they stepped again into the carriage, as if nothing had happened, Peter saying to the lieutenant of the police, "*Sadiss, brat!*" that is, "Sit down, brother!"

This anecdote was narrated by the son of Count Desiere, who filled the office of chamberlain to the Grand Duke, and probably thought it rather an honourable feature in the family history that his father had thus suffered personal chastisement from the great Czar! It was otherwise, however, when he treated with the same unseemly violence those who had been accustomed to the civilization and refinement of Western Europe. The death of Le Fort, the distinguished French general, to whose advice and instructions the Czar owed his first knowledge of military tactics, is ascribed to the keen sense of indignity which preyed on his mind in consequence of being subjected to such an assault as the native Muscovite nobles and princes regarded with indifference, if they did not almost esteem such an honour.

CHAPTER IV.

MANNERS AND SOCIAL HABITS OF THE RUSSIANS.

NOTHING gives a truer insight into the character of a nation than the habits which characterize the people in their social intercourse. We have already referred to the free use of intoxicating drinks by Peter the Great. In the latter years of his life he became simple, and even abstemious, in his diet, and extremely moderate in the use of wine and strong liquors; yet he never ceased to take pleasure in witnessing the boisterous enjoyment of others, and encouraged his guests to drink even to excess, while he watched the increasing noise and revelry with manifest satisfaction. This perhaps had its rise, in part, in his extreme dislike to the formal observances of court etiquette; yet, whatever be its source, it is one of the least pleasing aspects in which the imperial reformer appears. The following extraordinary and somewhat ludicrous account of a court banquet in the time of the Czar has been published in the memoir of Peter the Great, from a manuscript narrative by Dr. Birch, preserved among the Sloane Papers in the British Museum. After describing the coarse modes of cookery in use by the Russians, and their employment of onions, garlic, train oil, and other unpalatable accompaniments, he says: "The fowls which are for the Czar's own eating are very often dressed by his grand

Marskal Alseffiof, who is running up and down with his apron before him among the other cooks till it is time to take up dinner, when he puts on his fine clothes, and his full-bottomed wig, and helps to serve up the dishes.

The number of the persons invited is commonly two or three hundred, though there is room for no more than about an hundred, at four or five tables. But as there is no place assigned to anybody, and none of the Russians are willing to go home with an empty stomach, every body is obliged to seize his chair, and hold it with all his force, if he would not have it snatched from him.

The Czar being come in, and having chosen a place for himself, there is such scuffling and fighting for chairs that nothing more scandalous can be seen in any country; though the Czar does not mind in the least, nor trouble himself to put a stop to such disorder, pretending that a ceremony, and the formal regulations of a *marskal*, make company eat uneasy, and spoil the pleasure of conversation. Several foreign ministers have complained of this to the Czar, and refused to dine any more at court; but all the answer they got was, that it was not the Czar's business to turn master of the ceremonies, and please foreigners, nor was it his intention to abolish the freedom once introduced. This obliged strangers, for the future, to follow the Russian fashion in defending the possession of their chairs, by cuffing and boxing their opposers.

The company thus sitting down to table without any manner of grace, they are all so crowded together that they have much ado to lift their hands to their mouths. And if a stranger happens to sit between two Russians, which is commonly the case, he is sure of losing his appetite, though he should have happened to have ate nothing for two days before. Carpenters and shipwrights sit next to the Czar; but senators, ministers, generals, priests, sailors, buffoons of all kinds, sit pell-mell without any distinction.

The first course consists of nothing but cold meats, among which are hams, dried tongues, and the like, which not being liable to tricks in cooking, strangers ordinarily make their whole meal of them, without tasting anything else, though, generally speaking, every one takes his dinner beforehand at home.

Soups and roasted meats make the second course, and pastry the third.

As soon as one sits down, he is obliged to drink a cup of brandy; after which they ply you with great glasses full of adulterated *tookay*, and other vitiated wines, and, between whiles, a bumper of the strongest English beer, by which mixture of liquors every one of the guests is intoxicated before the soup is served.

The company, being in this condition, make such a noise, racket, and holloing, that it is impossible to hear one another, or even to hear the music, which is playing in the next room, consisting of a sort of trumpets and *corpets* (for the Czar hates violins), and with this revelling noise and uproar the Czar is ex-

tremely diverted, particularly if the guests fall to boxing, and get bloody noses.

Formerly the company had no napkins allowed them; but instead of it they had a piece of very coarse linen given them by a servant, who brought in the whole piece under his arm, and cut off half an ell for every person, which they were at liberty to carry home with them; for it had been observed that these pilfering guests used constantly to pocket the napkins. But at present two or three Russians must make shift with but one napkin, which they pull and haul for, like hungry dogs for a bone.

Each person of the company has but one plate during dinner; so, if some Russian does not care to mix the sauces of the different dishes together, he pours the soup that is left in his plate either into the dish, or into his neighbour's plate, or even under the table, after which he rubs his plate clean with his finger, and, last of all, wipes it with the table-cloth.

The tables are each thirty or forty feet long, and but two and a half broad. Three or four messes of one and the same course are served up to each table. The dessert consists of divers sorts of pastry and fruits, but the Czarina's table is furnished with sweetmeats. However, it is to be observed, that these sweetmeats are only set out on great festivals, for a show, and that the Russians of the best fashion have nothing for their dessert but the produce of the kitchen garden (as pease, beans, &c.), all raw."

The mode of signaling a grand entertainment

given on the occasion of the birth of a prince, by the Czarina Catherine, was not greatly superior to that described above. The young prince received the name of Peter Petrovitz, and the Kings of Denmark and Prussia stood as his godfathers. The joyous occasion was celebrated by festivals, balls, and public entertainments, which lasted ten days. At one of the grand dinners a device was introduced, not less puerile than it was rude and barbarous. On opening a large pie, which formed the centre dish of the chief table, a well-shaped female dwarf stepped out perfectly unclad, with the exception of a showy head dress. She made a speech to the company, drank their health in a glass of wine, and was then helped down from her singular platform. A male dwarf was served up in like manner at the table where the principal ladies sat by themselves, and entertained them in like manner. These dishes being removed, another pie was set on the table, which was supposed to contain the viands, which the guests had been disappointed of in the former pastry; but on the crust being broken, there sprung out a covey of living partridges.

It was not always for mere frolic, or as a relaxation from the cares of state, that Peter the Great had recourse to such singular entertainments as have been referred to. It was peculiarly characteristic of such an absolute ruler, that he should be very impatient of any clerical interference with his government. After the death of Adrian, patriarch of Moscow, which happened in the heat of the war, the primate's throne

remained vacant for several years, notwithstanding the strong and repeated solicitations of the heads of the clergy. The Czar had not forgot the vacancy, but recollecting the trouble his father had met with in maintaining his authority against the turbulent spirit of Nikon, the preceding patriarch, he resolved to be in no haste to dispose of the mitre. He gave vague answers to the representations that were made to him, urging as an excuse, the embarrassment he was thrown into by the ruinous war he was obliged to carry on, and the multitude of affairs that engaged his attention.

The Archbishop of Novogorod, Theophanes Procopowitsch, always confirmed Peter the Great in his projects, and on that account was called the Emperor's right hand. Although he was a candidate for the primacy, he was, nevertheless, accused of being the cause of the Czar's perseverance in his system, and of advising him to substitute in place of the patriarch an ecclesiastical board, under the name of a consistorial synod; though, from what we know of Peter's own character and plans, we may be sure no such advice was needed.

Peter having executed this project in 1721, and the archbishop having, in compliance with his desire, made the requisite ecclesiastical regulations, and printed a catechism enriched with illustrative notes and scriptural proofs, the Czar thought that no one would any longer desire a patriarch. Nevertheless, all the dignified clergy, except the Archbishop of Novogorod,

adhered to their former way of thinking, and retained their hopes of soon seeing a new primate appointed.

On the Czar's coming one day to the synod, at which he often presided, a petition was presented to him that he little expected, entreating him to appoint a patriarch. On reading it he struck his breast with great violence, and half drawing his sword, cried out in a transport of anger: "Here is your patriarch;" then rose immediately and went away.

Following up the same purpose, the politic Czar adopted a different plan for weaning the people from any desire for such an office. He took advantage of a general rejoicing, to make the patriarchal office an object of popular ridicule. The bishops, and some of the leading clergy, it is said, finding their own remonstrances and entreaties of no avail, tried to stir up the people to demand the nomination of their patriarch, and gave the Czar such hints as they could venture to offer, that the populace were becoming clamorous for this great ecclesiastical official. "They shall have a patriarch," said Peter, "and one to their liking too!" for he knew very well that it was not the people who were troubling themselves about the vacant office. He accordingly appointed Sotof, the court jester, to the office of patriarch, and authorized him to summon a conclave. Everything was arranged to give the most ludicrous aspect to the proceedings. The mock patriarch, who was in his eighty-fourth year, was at the same time to be married to a buxom widow, about half his age. A party of stutterers were selected to

invite the guests. The bulkiest, fattest, and most unwieldy men that could be obtained, were appointed his running footmen; and the cardinals, bishops, and other members of the conclave, were represented in a similar style of burlesque. To add to the ludicrous and extravagant folly of the scene, the whole assembly were allowed an unlimited supply of brandy. Music, grotesque masking, and harlequinade of every sort, filled up the measure of this patriarchal conclave, to the immense delight and merriment of the populace. The same ludicrous and farcical ceremony was renewed on three different occasions, both at Moscow and St. Petersburg, and by this means the popular idea of the patriarch came to be that of an imperial buffoon, or public jester, like the farcical Abbot of Unreason or Lord of Misrule of the middle ages.

During the celebration of this festival at St. Petersburg, the principal inhabitants were expected to keep open house. Their tables were spread with a cold collation, and with abundance of strong liquors; and so promptly did the citizens avail themselves of this free hospitality, that it is said there was scarcely a sober person to be found in the whole city. After these proceedings had lasted for nine days, the Czar crowned the whole by a grand entertainment at the senate house, at the conclusion of which each guest was required to empty a huge flaggon, like the world-famed bear of the Baron of Bradwardine, capable of containing a full bottle of wine. "To avoid this," says Captain Bruce, "I made my escape, pretending

to the officer on guard that I was going on a message from the Czar, which he believing let me pass; I went to the house of a Mr. Kelderman, who had formerly been one of the Czar's tutors, and was still in great favour with him. Mr. Kelderman followed me very soon, but not before he had drank off his double-eagle, and coming into his own house, he complained that he was sick with drinking; and sitting down by the table, laid his head on it, appearing as if fallen asleep. This being a common custom with him, his wife and daughters took no notice of it; till after some time observing him neither to move nor breathe, and coming close up to him, we found he was dead, which threw the family into great confusion. Knowing the esteem in which he stood with the Czar, I went and informed him of the sudden death of Mr. Kelderman. His Majesty's concern at the event brought him immediately to the house, where he condoled with the widow for the loss of her husband, ordered an honourable burial of the deceased at his own expense, and settled on her an annuity for life."

This melancholy catastrophe, resulting from the enforced potations of the Czar, did not put an end to the strange system of compulsory entertainments and festivities; which, though so strange in our estimation, were probably by no means ill-adapted for accomplishing the ends that Peter had in view. In his anxiety to advance his people to such a state of civilization as should enable them to compete on

equal terms with the nations of western Europe, he had tried the influence of the fine arts, with little effect. Painting and architecture flourished under his own direct patronage, but without any visible effect on the education of the people; while the Italian opera, introduced by him, which more directly appealed to popular taste and gratification, proved a failure. The coarse jests of the mock patriarch's carnival, and the marriage of the royal jester, proved greatly more congenial to the rude Muscovite than the sweetest tones and most moving scenes of the opera.

One of the great points aimed at by the Czar was the bringing of the two sexes together in public, and thereby breaking down that system of Oriental seclusion of the females, which, so long as it lasted, he perceived must form an obstacle to progressive civilization, and a barrier to any perfect freedom of intercourse with foreigners. With this object in view, he specially ordained regulations for enforcing the practice of assembling together in each other's houses; though the method adopted by him seems somewhat curious when tested by our ideas of personal liberty and social intercourse. "The Emperor," says one of the biographers of Peter the Great, "had endeavoured to bring the two sexes more frequently and publicly together, and had in some degree succeeded. He now instituted a regulation by which he should more effectually ensure this intercourse, by soirees or conversaziones, which

he wisely judged was the first step to smooth down the roughness of, and give a polish to his untutored countrymen. The regulations themselves show, in some degree, what the state of society was at that time. 1. A public notice was to be hung out at the house of assembly. 2. The company to assemble not sooner than five, nor continue later than ten. 3. The master of the house to find chairs, candles, liquors, and all necessaries that might be required; materials, as cards, &c., for gaming; but not obliged to attend to or wait on his guests. 4. Every one to come and go when he pleases, within the prescribed hours. 5. Every one to sit, walk, play, or converse, just as it suits him; any breach of etiquette to be punished by the person committing it emptying the *great eagle*. 6. Noblemen, officers of state, of the army and navy, respectable merchants and ship-builders, with their wives and children, to have liberty to frequent these assemblies. 7. A particular place to be assigned to the servants.

These soirees are said to have been attended with the happiest effects, though the admission of such a mixed company was sometimes productive of rather awkward situations. The great propensity which the Russians generally had for strong liquors, the ladies as well as gentlemen, was occasionally indulged in to excess, and scenes occurred that would not be tolerated in civilized society. It required time to get rid of this gross indulgence, if it has yet been entirely eradicated; for it is stated, on very

competent authority, that "intoxication is not disgraceful, and, even among people of good condition, if a lady be overtaken in liquor, it is no subject of reproach;" the Russians are said to be "friendly, jovial, and courteous; boast of their friendship; and those that are not able to stand find ready assistance from those who can."

CHAPTER V.

EDUCATION OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE.

It has already been made abundantly manifest by various of the anecdotes recorded of Peter the Great, that, like other distinguished popular reformers, nothing was too minute to be unworthy of his notice, or to seem undeserving of care. On his return from Holland and England, after he had suppressed the insurrection of the Strelitzes with the utmost rigour and cruelty, he set himself resolutely to effect the regeneration of the country. A reformer familiar only with the humanity and refinement of Western civilization would probably have despaired of a people who retained far more of the characteristics of the nomade Tartar than of the European. Peter, however, with all his fine natural genius and indomitable energy, was only himself emerging from the same condition, and therefore saw no insurmountable difficulties in

the attempt to lead his people in his own footsteps. The very first object which the intrepid reformer assailed, was the national dress. This was formed entirely on the Tartar model, and had undergone no modification from any intercourse with western Europe. The direct influence of government had hitherto fostered this Oriental costume, and the dress of the Russian soldier seemed to the rest of Europe equally barbarous and inconvenient. He wore a pair of loose and very wide drawers, presenting to the eye the appearance of a petticoat, and over this, a long coat reaching to the heels, and belted round the waist. Such a dress was manifestly equally unsoldier-like, and ill-adapted for the actual vicissitudes of war. The dress was completed by a conical cap or helmet on the head, and its effeminate character was somewhat awkwardly redeemed by a great bushy, untrimmed beard, nearly covering the face. The whole dress manifestly had its origin in the indolent and uncleanly customs of the wandering life among the Tartar hordes of Asia, and served as an easy cover for slothfulness and filth. It was, moreover, a most manifest and visible bar of separation between the native Russian and the civilized European. The whole of these exterior emblems of barbarism were at once condemned by the Czar. The soldiers were required to shave, and compelled to adopt the European costume, with all the harassing attentions to order, uniformity, and tidiness of dress, which is now universally required of the soldier.

The objections to the Muscovite dress were no less applicable to the civilian than the soldier; but Peter was a practical man, and knew the danger of hastily meddling with the hereditary prejudices and fixed habits of a whole people. He had already had sufficient evidence of the personal enmity with which he was regarded in certain influential quarters. The clergy, moreover, had as usual set their faces resolutely against all innovation; and there were millions of serfs prepared to resent any encroachment on their deeply rooted prejudices and customs. The beard especially, in its untrimmed and ample condition, which has been recognised for upwards of two thousand years as one of the most unmistakeable exterior symbols of barbarism, was regarded by the Russian peasantry as one of their most sacred personal rights; and nothing probably could have led more certainly to a revolution, and a complete overthrow of all the Czar's schemes of reform, than any attempt at a universal enforcement of his plan for assimilating the native Russians to the more civilized natives of western Europe. He accordingly limited the imperative requirement of uniformity to the new model, to the army alone, while he left to all ranks of civilians the free choice between shaving their beards and docking the skirts of their coats, or paying a fixed tax. This, for the citizens, was fixed at one hundred roubles; while from the priests and the peasantry it was levied in the form of a fine of a kopec every time they passed the gate of any city.

Such was the pertinacity with which they preserved their beards, as a distinguishing mark from foreigners, for whom they were taught by the clergy to entertain an inveterate dislike, that this tax on beards soon became a productive source of revenue to the Czar.

Among the nobility, officials, and public functionaries of all sorts, the will of the Emperor in such a matter of taste was of course law, and thus the influence of fashion and example was brought to bear on the people, especially in St. Petersburg, and other large towns. But this, which exercises so powerful an influence in Paris or London, affected only a very small circle in Russia; and, to this day, the rough, bushy beard of the native Muscovite is a universal characteristic of the lower classes in Russia.

It was not, however, as a mere reformer of an ungainly and barbarous costume that Peter interfered. He aimed at promoting the personal comfort, as well as reforming the manners of his subjects.

"The Emperor," says M. Stæhlin, "notwithstanding the important affairs that demanded his attention, did not neglect those which seem of inferior consequence, but which, nevertheless, contribute to the happiness of the people. Several of his actions prove this beyond dispute; but the only one we shall mention here, is the pains he took to improve the Russian *labti*. The *labti* is a kind of shoe worn by the country people, and is made of osiers, or the bark of the birch tree matted in the form of a sock, and tied on the foot with a string.

The Czar having remarked that the Russian peasants made more neat and durable *labtis* than the Finlanders, attributed the diseases to which the latter were subject to this want of industry. He asked them why they did not make their *labtis* with more care? and as they answered they could not, he sent for six men, well skilled in the business, from the governments of Novogorod and Cassan, from whence many thousands are circulated, every year, over the different provinces of the empire.

These six workmen were successively distributed through the parishes of Finland, where, under the inspection of the vicars, they taught the peasants to make their *labtis* in a more wholesome and durable manner; nor were they permitted to return home till all the inhabitants had learned their method.

The vicars were obliged to give an account every month to the governor of Vibourg of the progress made by their parishioners. They also received a sum of money, which they distributed to the shoemakers at the rate of a rouble per week.


By these means the Czar procured the Finland peasantry shoes more capable of resisting the weather, and consequently more proper to defend them from the diseases to which they were exposed by those they were before accustomed to wear."

An amusing specimen of the obstinate ignorance of popular prejudice was furnished by a reform of a different nature, effected by the Czar. He had seen, from his intercourse with European nations,

the inconvenience which arose from the calendar of Russia differing from all the others. The Russian year began on the first of September, and hence, for a third of every year, the date of the year was irreconcilable with that of other countries. The inconvenience of this became at once manifest when commercial intercourse had been established with Holland and Great Britain, and Peter accordingly resolved that an alteration should be made, so as to bring the Russian calendar into uniform agreement with that recognised throughout the rest of Christian Europe. He fixed on the opening year of the 18th century as most suitable for this important change, and issued orders that the year 1700 should commence on the first of January, and be inaugurated by a general jubilee, and suitable religious solemnities calculated to impress the new change on the popular mind. This, however, was an innovation on ancient customs which no religious solemnities could reconcile to the minds of the bigoted and refractory Russian priesthood. It was a settled dogma of the Russian Church that God created the world in the month of September, and any attempt to shift the beginning of the year from that which, it seemed to them, had been unalterably fixed from all time for its commencement, was, in their estimation, such a profane and athiestical innovation as Antichrist alone could originate. To the rude populace, in whose minds this idea of creation had been indoctrinated as one of the most essential points of their belief, the

profanity of the proposed change seemed even less manifest than its impossibility. The great bulk of them demanded of their priests, with incredulous surprise, how the Czar proposed to change the course of the sun! and were answered by such refinements of stolid bigotry and ignorance as left them all the more impressed with the impious daring of this new imperial design. The Czar, however, had already achieved so much, that even the most ignorant and incredulous were impressed with a vague belief that he would, somehow or other, accomplish this feat. Meanwhile the Czar's authority sufficed to establish the change at St. Petersburg and the principal sea-ports, where its immediate adoption was of the most importance. In all public offices, courts of justice, and throughout the army and navy, the new style was, in like manner, introduced by the Czar's authority; and thus, while the priests continued in remote rural districts to denounce it as profane, impious, and impossible, the change slowly spread wherever commerce or court patronage extended their influence, until in Russia, as elsewhere, the old style became obsolete.

The construction of a fleet, and the creation of an efficient navy, were points of no less difficulty, from their interference with the stubborn prejudices of a people, whose capital had hitherto been remote from all intercourse with any maritime nation, and whose clergy taught them to look upon all foreign arts and customs with a contempt and hatred still more intense



than the feelings with which the Chinese have been accustomed to look down on all beyond the pale of the celestial empire as ignorant barbarians. But the Czar had other and no less formidable difficulties to remove, in the absence of all sea-board to the Russian empire, as it stood when he succeeded to his father's throne. With the attainment of the latter, some of the other obstacles disappeared, and by the transference of the court and capital to the Neva, at the head of the Gulf of Finland, where the nobles and citizens were brought under the direct influence of foreign merchants, and of the growing Russian navy, all direct opposition to this important change was got rid of. When, however, the peace of Neustadt was signed, on the 10th of September 1721, by which the dominion of the Gulf of Finland and the command of the Baltic Sea were finally secured to Russia, the Czar determined, with characteristic vigour, to fit even his inland people for appreciating the important advantages thus secured to them.

By the peace of Neustadt, all the conquests of Peter the Great were finally secured to him; and he thus became absolute sovereign over Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, Carelia, Wyburg, and all the adjacent islands. The joy of the Czar was unbounded, as in this he may be said to have attained the summit of his desires. Yet with a wisdom and moderation singularly contrasting with the bigoted hatred of foreigners, which the creed of his church and country cherished, one of his first proceedings was

to try by all means to attach the people to him as securely as he had done the country. All Swedish prisoners were set at liberty, and both officers and soldiers were tempted by the offer of equivalent or superior rank, and better pay, in the Russian army, to adopt the country as their own. To the civilians, and the inhabitants of the sea-ports, he was still more liberal. The reformed Protestants of Riga obtained from him a church for the public exercise of their religion, along with privileges and immunities which they had in vain sought for from the Swedish government. To these were added other privileges extending to the whole community, and specially adapted to encourage foreigners to settle among them. In like manner, he restored to the Livonians rights and privileges of which they had been deprived during the reigns of the two preceding Swedish sovereigns, and for which they had striven with a resolute determination that brought some of their chief men to the block. By these and the like means, the Czar effectually consolidated his extended empire, and bound his new subjects to him by the most effectual ties, originating in a community of interest.

The Czar now sought to enlist the sympathy of the whole empire in his new acquisitions, and to awake in their minds a sense of their importance. For this purpose a day of public thanksgiving for the peace was appointed. A general amnesty was ordered to be proclaimed throughout the empire, not only for such as had committed offences deserving of

punishment, but even for those on whom sentence had been passed. All public debts were declared to be remitted to those who were unable to pay; and the poor subjects of the Czar were absolved from all arrears of taxes or imposts due to the treasury, up to the day of the proclamation of the peace. The senate carried these commands into immediate execution, and by its orders all persons confined in the prisons or galleys, whether for debts, misdemeanors, or political crimes, were liberated. Even those accused of high treason were included in this comprehensive amnesty, robbery and murder being the sole exceptions to its merciful operations.

The Czar now found leisure to exhibit to the inhabitants of his ancient inland capital, such illustrations of the changes wrought on the empire as might help to break down their old prejudices, and awaken them to some interest in its progress. A period of jubilee in celebration of the peace was fixed to be held at Moscow; and the Czar, breaking through his wonted aversion to bearing a part in any public ceremonial display, introduced these public rejoicings by making his triumphal entry into Moscow at the head of his guards. Triumphal arches were erected in the principal streets, and fetes, balls, masquerades, and public games, followed, which lasted for six weeks. In the midst of these, the Czar contrived to introduce the means for accomplishing the object he had in view. A series of grand marine processions were contrived so as to exhibit to the inhabitants, who had

never seen the sea, some adequate representation of the new powers and means of extended influence acquired by the nation, and thereby to convey to them some definite ideas of a commercial and warlike navy. A yacht of beautiful workmanship was completely rigged as a ship; splendidly decorated with painting and gilding, and hung with the most showy banners. This vessel was mounted with twelve small brass guns, and being placed on a sledge drawn by horses, a select crew was provided, consisting of the Czar himself, the Duke of Holstein, and the most distinguished officers of the army and navy, all dressed in a gala naval costume. A band of martial music occupied the poop; and in this naval chariot the Czar rode daily through the principal streets of Moscow, halting at the house of some of the principal nobles at which he was to dine, and greeting his host with a salute from the guns of the yacht.

After this royal galley came a frigate of 16 guns, completely manned with youths habited like Dutch skippers, but with their dresses made of rich velvet. These trimmed the sails, and performed all the manœuvres of a ship at sea. This again was followed by a richly decorated barge, the crew of which consisted of the Empress and the principal ladies of the court. Upwards of thirty vessels of various kinds followed. Pilot boats were seen, from which the pilots heaved the lead, and noted the soundings. Trading ships, pinnaces, fishing sloops, and wherries,

were all represented, each filled with masqueraders in the costumes of the different nations of Europe; and some of them so large as to require forty horses to draw them. Thus were the inhabitants of Moscow, who had never before seen anything of the kind but the clumsy flat-bottomed barges on their own little stream, apprized in some measure of the nature of a marine, and of the imposing spectacle of the commercial and warlike navy, by means of which they were now being brought into intimate union with civilized Europe. Few proceedings of the great Czar are more thoroughly characteristic of that original genius which so peculiarly capacitated him to become the reformer and regenerator of his people. While the populace of Moscow were intent only on pleasure, the Czar had a deep purpose in view in these singular fetes. Their hereditary aversion to maritime affairs, and to all intercourse with other nations, was being sapped and broken down, and they were thus being fitted for bearing a more active part in the extending commercial relations of the Russian empire, which, before the death of the Czar, connected the Finland Gulf, by direct intercourse, with the empire of China. By means such as this, Peter gradually changed the external aspect, the social habits and ideas, and the whole manners of the people. Their Tartar robes and beards gave place to a costume more nearly approaching that of western Europe; and the old titles of boyards, okolnitchie, dumnie-diaki, and the like, were superseded by those of presidents, counsellors,

senators, generals, and admirals, such as the Czar had become familiar with during his sojourn in England and the Low Countries.

CHAPTER VI.

RUSSIA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CATHERINE II., the celebrated Empress of Russia, undertook, in January 1787, a royal progress through her dominions, in order to visit in triumph the Crimea, or ancient Tauris, renowned both in fable and in history, which her troops had recently wrested from the sway of the fierce Mussulman. This journey disclosed, in succession, the various scenes of a panorama which we will attempt to sketch, in order to convey some idea of Russia towards the close of the eighteenth century; thus forming a connecting link between Russia as it was, and as it is.

The imperial cortege consisted of fourteen carriages, twenty-four ordinary sledges, and forty baggage waggons, while relays of five hundred and sixty horses were in waiting at every stage. The cold was intense; the roads, hardened by the frost and snow, were in excellent condition, and the number and fine condition of the horses enabled them to move at such a rate, that the carriages mounted on their lofty sliders seemed to fly along the ground.

At the period of the year selected the days are at the shortest, the sun appearing above the horizon only six or seven hours out of the twenty-four; but the Oriental luxury affected by the Russian court found means of effectually supplying the want of light on the way. At short distances on both sides of the road, enormous piles of fir-trees, cypresses, beeches, and pines were placed, and being lighted as they approached, they moved along a path illuminated with a brilliancy rivalling that of the day.

It would be tedious to describe all the towns and villages which the imperial cortege passed in so long a journey; we will mention only those which appear to deserve some notice from their size, antiquity, wealth, or historical interest.

During the first part of this journey, begun in the middle of a rigorous winter, the Empress and her suite had to traverse immense plains covered with snow, and vast forests of firs bristling with icicles, presenting sometimes, by the reflection of the sun's rays, the brilliancy of the crystal and the diamond. At this season, a great part of Russia differs little from Siberia itself in point of cold. Every animal remains under cover, and the natives cower over their hearths, close to the indispensable stove with which each cottage is provided. No living thing is ever seen to move along those dreary solitudes of snow and ice, excepting now and then long trains of sledges, flying in different directions at full gallop, bearing the varied products of agricultural and manufacturing industry

to the different towns and villages, resembling fleets of merchantmen traversing a sea of ice.

It is not difficult to imagine the striking contrast that now presented itself. In the midst of this waste of snow, a thousand blazing piles stretched themselves in a line as far as the eye could reach, along which flashed the imperial cavalcade, environed with all the pomp and luxury of an Eastern court. At some distance from the towns and villages which they passed in succession, the solitudes were peopled with multitudes of the citizens and villagers, whom curiosity, or the fear of official censure, prompted to brave the rigours of the climate, and who welcomed their sovereign as she passed with prolonged cheers and acclamations.

At every halting-place, the Empress found either a palace or some elegant mansion fitted up for her reception. At all the towns, the persons composing her suite obtained accommodation with the wealthiest of the inhabitants; but in the villages and smaller towns, they could find shelter only in the peasants' houses, where the heat of their close and confined rooms was so excessive, that sleep was not to be thought of. A little narrow slit was the only window, imparting a faint glimmer of light to a low-roofed chamber, almost completely filled by an enormous stove, surrounded with wooden seats placed close to the walls. This stove serves the peasant, his wife, and children, instead of a bed; and a burning twig of resinous wood supplies them with light.

The face of the country which the Empress passed

through at the commencement of this journey, presents little variety of aspect, consisting, as it does, only of forests and frozen marshes. The government of St. Petersburg alone contained seventy thousand acres of wood; but owing to the rigour of the climate, the consumption was so great, that the Empress, by a ukase, commanded that not more than the thirtieth part should be cut in any one year, and the ground immediately thereafter re-planted.

Smolensk, Porkhoff, and other towns in succession, presented themselves to the eye of the travellers. Smolensk, the first of these, is associated by Frenchmen with the memory of fruitless victories and terrible disasters. The flames of the burning city, kindled by the inhabitants themselves in 1812, glared ominously on the deceitful triumph of the most celebrated warrior of modern times; and on his return, its charred and blackened ruins seemed to scowl on the thinned ranks of his shattered army, and to foretell the speedily approaching overthrow of the empire founded by that extraordinary man.

The commerce of Smolensk with Riga and Poland was at this time in a state of great vigour, and had been rapidly developed by the advancement of agriculture and civilization in the southern provinces of the empire: its government forms one of the richest provinces of Russia, and its resources arising from agriculture are less exposed to vicissitudes than wealth derived from most other industrial sources.

The situation of Smolensk is highly picturesque:

the beauty of the Dnieper, the rapidity of its current, which, commencing almost at its source, flows past the ancient city of Kieff with majestic impetuosity, and even continues to increase till it falls into the Euxine Sea ; the steep and precipitous nature of its banks, crowned at some points by buildings in the form of an amphitheatre; at others, hollowed into deep and rugged ravines ; and country seats, gardens, and orchards, mingled in pleasing and endless confusion—all present to the eye of the traveller the most singular scene that can be imagined. The more striking features of the picture, it is true, could, at the season of the Empress's journey, be seen only as through a veil ; still it was impossible not to be struck with the change of aspect which the face of the country presented, from the time they left the government of St. Petersburg, and had entered an interesting chain of heights that commences near Porkhoff, and forms the source of the Dwina, Wolga, and Dnieper, which pour their waters, the first into the North Sea, and the two others into the Caspian and Black Seas.

After three days' stay at Smolensk, the travellers resumed their journey, and six days' travelling brought the Empress to Kieff, the venerable capital of the early Czars of Russia, situated on the Dnieper, about four hundred leagues from St. Petersburg. Here again they paused, the further prosecution of the journey being deferred till the melting of the ice set free the navigation of the river.

The approach to Kieff awakens in the mind that deep feeling of reverence which the sight of the relics of ancient times rarely fails to inspire. The picturesque situation of the ancient city also adds to this impression. On beholding it, we are reminded that it formed the cradle of an immense empire, long plunged in obscurity, but which, in the course of a century and a half, has risen to so colossal a height, both in power and resources.

It was from the walls of Kieff that the first armies set out to assail the tottering throne of the Eastern empire, and from thence proceeded the chieftains who hurled their lances at the gilded portals of the city of Constantine. It was to Kieff that a Greek princess first brought the light of the gospel, which has since spread with such rapidity, reaching even to the icy regions of the pole. The name Kieff comes from a Sarmatian word, *Kivi*, which signifies mountain; and in point of fact it is built on several steep and lofty elevations. Founded in the fifth century, it did not become the capital of the Russian empire till the eleventh. Kieff has experienced many disastrous vicissitudes. It has been taken and retaken by the khan of Tartary, and its fortifications have been repeatedly demolished, and its inhabitants carried into captivity.

This city is built on an elevation, rising perpendicularly in some places, two hundred and forty feet above the level of the river, which gives it an imposing appearance when viewed from the opposite bank,

and enables it still to retain some semblance of its ancient dignity. At the time of the Empress's visit, it covered a vast space of ground, but presented to the eye an incongruous mixture of majestic ruins and miserable huts, a few large convents, many churches with gilded domes, and numerous palaces and other stone buildings, which had been begun, but never finished, and were now mouldering in premature decay. The ground on which the city is built forms three natural divisions: the first consists of the fortress of Petshersky, and its suburbs; the second contains the ancient city; the third, forming the district called Podol, consists of the more newly built houses close to the Dnieper. Each of these divisions is surrounded by ramparts, which communicate with each other by means of intrenchments.

The environs of Kieff are occupied here and there with hermitages and monasteries pleasantly situated. Among these is the monastery of Voudoubetz, the name of which recalls an ancient tradition. "Prince Vladimir," say the old chronicles, "having received Christian baptism, resolved to destroy the pagan temples and their idols; he made the principal idol, which was named Peroun, be dragged from its place and flung into the river. The superstitious people, attached to the worship of their favourite idol, cried with groans, 'Peroun, Peroun, voudoubey!' that is, 'Peroun, Peroun, come out of the water!' It so happened that the idol got aground at the place where the monastery of which we speak stands, and

the spot ever after was sacred in the eyes of the credulous people; hence its name, Vouidoubetz."

A temporary palace of vast size had been reared in expectation of the Empress's visit, of elegant proportions, and richly and tastefully fitted up, where she received the homage of the clergy and nobility, the merchants, and the numerous visitors from a distance, who had been attracted by the magnificence and novelty of the spectacle that now met their eye: a sumptuous court; a rich nobility; warlike chieftains; officers of all ranks; bearded merchants, in long robes; the famous Cossacks of the Don, in their rich Asiatic costume, celebrated for the length of their lances and their undisciplined valour; and Tartars, formerly the lords of Russia, now the humble subjects of the Empress. A prince of Georgia brought to the foot of the throne the tributēs of Pharos and Colchia; representatives of the numerous tribes of the Kirghis followed—a nomadic and warlike people, often vanquished, never subdued; and, finally, the fierce Kalmoucks appeared, the descendants of those Huns who, under the leadership of King Atilla, burst like a deluge over the fairest countries of Europe.

The representatives of the whole East seemed to pour in to obtain a sight of the modern Semiramis, presenting at one view the most striking contrasts of manners, figures, and costumes.

Here the Empress passed the winter, but as soon as the waters of the Dnieper were released from their wintry chain, and nature resumed the fairer colours

of spring, Catherine gave the signal to depart, and embarked on the 1st of May 1787, on board a splendid galley, followed by as proud a fleet as stream ever bore on its bosom. It consisted of twenty-four ships, having on board three thousand sailors and soldiers; at their head sailed seven galleys of an elegant form and tasteful decorations, and furnished with numerous crews, all clothed in splendid uniforms. The cabins fitted up in the after part of the ships were resplendent with silk and gold; each galley had its band of music; and numberless shallops and small boats, covering the face of the waters in all directions, accompanied the imperial squadron in its progress. The whole scene seemed more like a creation of the fancy than a scene of actual life.

The Empress was received, as soon as she made her appearance, with firing of cannon and the shouts of an immense multitude, who had come from all parts of the empire to enjoy the spectacle, or had been commanded to join the adulatory crowd which lined both banks of the river as she passed; nor were the usual theatrical disguises so characteristic of a Russian imperial progress wanting on this occasion. The cities, villages, country houses, and even the humblest cottages, were so ornamented and disguised with triumphal arches, garlands of flowers, and elegant architectural façades, as to deceive the eyes with the appearance of magnificent cities, palaces, and gardens, which in reality had no existence.

The snow had now wholly disappeared; a smiling

verdure covered the ground; the fields were enamelled with flowers; a bright sun imparted life and freshness to nature; and the gay scene was further enlivened by harmonious music proceeding from the galleys. The varied costumes of the spectators who lined the banks gave additional life and interest, and as the Empress approached the great towns, picked men from the different cavalry regiments were drawn up to receive her, in all the dazzling glitter of their arms and the splendour of their uniforms. The weather, the season of the year, nature and art, all seemed to combine to secure the triumph of Prince Potemkin, whose government Catherine was then traversing. This powerful favourite hoped, by surrounding his sovereign with so many evidences of her power, at the moment when she was passing in triumph through countries recently vanquished by her arms, to inflame her ambition, and awaken the desire of attempting new conquests.

The course down the river extended from Kieff to Kaydak, a distance of four hundred and forty-six versts. Near the latter town, the cataracts of the Borysthenes begin, the most dangerous of which is the eighth, named Ninajetinsk, seven hundred fathoms in length, with a fall of six and a quarter feet.

Prince Potemkin had prepared a nocturnal fete to celebrate the *entree* of his sovereign into Kaydak. As soon as the night was sufficiently advanced, the mountain of Kanieff burst into a flame: a winding fosse having been dug in its sides, all round, filled with

combustible matter. When fully lighted up, it presented the appearance of lava issuing from a volcano, and rushing furiously down the mountain sides; and, as if to complete the resemblance, a hundred thousand muskets were fired at the same instant, causing the air to reverberate for miles around. The effect of the whole was doubled by the reflection from the waters of the Dnieper.

The imperial party arrived at Kremenschuk on the 10th of May, when spring was shedding life and beauty around. There a large and splendid mansion was prepared for the reception of the Empress, surrounded by a garden laid out in the English taste, into which Prince Potemkin, at great expense, had caused to be transplanted a number of trees of enormous size. Twelve thousand troops were mustered, all newly clothed and equipped; the nobility also attended in their rich dresses, and the merchants and gentry came from all the provinces of the empire.

Prince Potemkin was unwearied in his endeavours to gratify his sovereign to the utmost. Whatever means his boundless power or knowledge of the Empress's character could suggest, he employed to this end with equal ability and success. He was a special adept in the well-known Russian manoeuvre, of cheating the eyes of the travellers as they traversed these sandy and barren deserts with the appearance of life and fertility. He took care not to allow the fleet to come to anchor, excepting only before picturesquely situated towns and villages. Immense

flocks of sheep were seen browsing the green sward; groups of peasantry enlivened the mountain sides; boats in countless numbers sailed about the river, filled with youths of both sexes singing their native airs, all brought for mere show, to meet the eye of the Empress as she sailed past, and trained as so many actors, to ape in this manner the appearance of prosperity, contented cheerfulness, and devotion to their rulers.

At Krementschuk, the prince gave orders for a grand military spectacle to take place in her presence, in which forty-five squadrons of cavalry and a numerous body of infantry went through the manœuvrings of a mock fight. After the review, Catherine re-embarked on board her galley, and resumed her route. The river at this point becomes wider and shallower, which made the navigation more difficult than it had hitherto been, and every now and then, owing to light or contrary winds, some of the ships got aground on the low-lying islands and sandbanks that impeded the channel.

On the 20th May, the whole party landed, and encamped at some distance from Kaydak. The Empress, after hearing mass in the imperial tent, laid the first stone of Ekatharinoslaff, a royal palace built on a commanding site, from whence the windings of the Dnieper and the wood-clad islands that adorned this part of its course could be seen for miles. Near this spot also is the celebrated cataract, long regarded as absolutely impassable. The Dnieper at

this place is encumbered throughout its whole breadth with rocks, stretching in a chain from one side to the other; some allowing the water to flow past, others forming cascades, down which it dashes and foams with fury. Experience, however, has taught the boatmen of the Dnieper to overcome its difficulties, and when the water is high the passage can be effected with little difficulty, under the guidance of certain old Zaporavians accustomed to the perilous navigation.

On leaving Ekatharinoslaff, the imperial party entered the steppes, those vast and solitary plains, whose tame and level aspect is broken only at long intervals by a few inconsiderable hills, down the naked sides of which mere threads of water here and there are seen to descend, forming small winding streams in the plains below. These steppes may be traversed seven or eight leagues together, without meeting a single human being or seeing a house or tree. Flocks of sheep and studs of horses, allowed to run at large all the year round, alone people these vast solitudes.

Upon visiting these regions, the sight of an immense horizon of verdure produces for a time an effect on the mind similar to that awakened by the first view of the ocean; but as the traveller advances, an irrepressibly painful feeling of loneliness soon begins to make itself felt, at seeing nothing but the sky above, and one boundless and unvaried expanse of verdure all around.

Lying partly in Europe and partly in Asia, these steppes extend, on the European side, from the Bug to the Sea of Azoph, and, on the Asiatic side, from the Caucasus to the frontiers of China, presenting everywhere the same unvarying features.

The imperial party had to traverse one of these steppes for a hundred leagues, before they reached Kherson, the capital of the government of the same name. It was in the government of Kherson, towards the end of the last century, that the Duc de Richelieu founded the city of Odessa, that brilliant creation of Catherine II., who, as if by enchantment, transformed, in a few years, what was formerly an arid waste, into a territory covered with populous villages, in the midst of which rises one of the most flourishing cities of Europe.

From Kherson the Empress proceeded to Kesekerman, situated on the right bank of the Dnieper. This little town formerly belonged to the Nogais Tartars. Catherine crossed the river at this place, and on landing at the other side, found a troop of Tartars of the chief families waiting to do her homage, and act as her escort. From this place, in order to reach Perekop, it was necessary to cross the great desert of Nogais, an immense steppe, totally bare of trees, in which the only vestige of human labour is a bridge built of dark-coloured stones, across the little river of Kalentchuk.


At this place, as previously arranged by Prince Potemkin, fifty squadrons of Cossacks of the Don

unexpectedly presented themselves to the view of Catherine, whose picturesque Asiatic costumes, the rapidity of their movements, the beauty and spirit of their horses, and their fine appearance at full gallop, with their long lances in rest, made the bleakness of the desert steppes be forgotten.

This spectacle was followed by another scarcely less striking. A tribe of wandering Tartar shepherds with their camels, presented themselves in the plain to the eye of the travellers. Next, an immense tent appeared, that advanced, or at least seemed to advance, by its own proper motion, along the grassy plain. Shortly after, a number of Kalmoucks were seen to come out of this singular locomotive dwelling, the invisible genii, doubtless, by whom the apparent prodigy had been effected.

The reader will be interested in some details as to the construction of Kalmouck tents. First of all, a slight circular frame is prepared, of wooden trellis-work, about four feet high from the ground, and enclosing a space from fifteen to twenty feet in diameter; on the upper cornice of this frame, as a base, another conically shaped frame is placed, made of laths or thin wooden rods, twenty-five or thirty feet long; these rods do not meet in a point at the vertex of the cone, but their upper ends are attached all round a small circle of wood, a little below the proper vertex, which is cut away, thus forming a truncated cone. These rods are kept in their places by means of transverse strips of leather, fastened by


pins, which can be taken out at pleasure. The whole is covered by an immense web of camels'-hair cloth, reaching to the ground. The lower folds of this covering can be raised on any side at the convenience of the inmates; while the upper aperture serves for ventilation, and also allows the smoke to escape. The furniture of the tent consists of couches and raised divans, made of the same material as the covering of the tent. Thirty individuals may lodge comfortably in one of these tents, the flocks and camels sleeping on the outside all around it. When about to travel to a distant part, they take off the covering, remove the nails, tie up the rods in bundles, and place the whole in a single waggon. When, however, they have to move only a short distance in search of fresh pastures, they do not take the tent to pieces, but simply bear it up from the inside, and make it move slowly along till they reach their destination. It was a manœuvre of this sort which they performed in the presence of the Empress. Those who are accustomed from their youth to this sort of dwelling, probably find it sufficiently commodious, and suited to the circumstances of a nomadic life. There is something childish, however, and ludicrous in the extreme, to fancy a sovereign making a progress through her dominions, not to discover its wants and promote the amelioration of the people, or to redress their grievances, but only to be made the sport of such theatrical displays, by which barren wastes and wretched hovels were made for the



moment to assume the appearance of well-peopled regions and comfortable dwellings.

The imperial party arrived, almost immediately after traversing this great steppe, at Perekop, a narrow isthmus which separates the Black Sea from the Sea of Azoph, and which constitutes the entrance and the key of the peninsula of the Crimea, to which the Empress had restored the ancient name of Tauris, or Taurida. The mountain district in the southern part of Tauris presents to the eye a richly varied aspect; the air is pure and healthy, the sky clear, and nature lavish in her bounties. The majestic appearance of the hills, some of which rise to the height of eighteen hundred feet, is highly imposing. The numerous valleys that lie at their base abound in fertile vines; fruits and flowers, woods and clumps of trees, streams, cascades, and richly cultivated fields, all combine to give charm and variety to the scene. The change, indeed, is very remarkable. After crossing these mountains, the climate resembles that of Naples and Venice; while toward the north, in the plain extending from the Baltic to the Euxine—that is, a distance of eight hundred leagues, where not a single elevation rises to serve as a screen from the biting winds—during a great part of the year, the traveller experiences the rigour of the polar regions.

Considering the extent of the Crimea, the variety of its productions, and the means of defence that nature has lavished on it, it is not wonderful that so many nations, even from the earliest times, have



engaged in fierce contests for its possession. Its most ancient inhabitants, so far as traditional records have come down to us, were the Kimeres, or Kimbres, who gave their name to the Kimerian Bosphorus; then came in succession the Scythians, the Greeks, the people of Pontus under their celebrated king Mithridates, the Romans, the Alans, the Goths, the Huns, the Kozars, the Comans, the Pelchenegues; and, last of all, the Tartars, who, in the thirteenth century, gave to the Tauris the name of *Crim*, or *fortress*, and there founded the kingdom of the Khans of the Crimea.

Less than two centuries after, the Crimea became the prey of the Turks, under Mahomet II., who invested a descendant of the celebrated Gengis with the title and authority of Khan of the Crimea. Catherine, only a short time previous to the commencement of the journey now referred to, had dethroned the last khan, and effected the conquest of the Tauris, which gave to Russia the command of the Black Sea, and laid open her road to the Ottoman capital. Thus victorious over every obstacle, Catherine had now the satisfaction of entering the Tauris in triumph, and seating herself on the throne of those Tartar princes, whose ancestors had so long compelled the Czars of Russia to do homage to the chiefs of the grand horde.

On the 30th June, the Empress passed the famous lines of Perekop, which, notwithstanding the strength of the position, and the depth of the artificial ditches,

had never been able to arrest the progress of an enemy. At this place, a strong body of Tartar cavalry presented themselves, to act as a guard of honour to the Empress; nor would she consent to have any other escort during her sojourn in the Crimea than these same Tartars, who held her sex in contempt, were inveterate enemies of Christianity, and had been only so recently subjugated to her sway. This daring proof of her confidence in their good faith and loyalty succeeded wonderfully with these barbarians.

The next day the Empress and her escort crossed the Salguire, and, taking a final leave of the desert, they eagerly turned their faces in the direction of the mountains, amid the smiling valleys of which they hoped once more to enjoy some repose, and refresh their eyes with the sight of picturesque hills, cultivated plains, elegant mansions, an active peasantry, and the true comforts of civilized life, of which, notwithstanding all the ingenious devices already described, they seemed to have lost nearly every trace while traversing the wild and solitary steppes.

They arrived, in the evening, at the town of Bach-tchi-Sarai, and the whole imperial court took up its quarters in the palace of the ancient khan. This city is situated in a narrow valley or gorge, on the River Tschourouk, founded in the sixteenth century by the Tartars. Its meanly built houses rise like an amphitheatre, on the declivities of the lofty hills surrounding its narrow site, and, in some places,

overhang it to such a degree as to seem to threaten it with destruction: altogether, the scene that presents itself is one of the most singular that can be imagined.

A frightful disaster is said to have nearly overtaken the Empress as she entered the city. The road descends with extreme abruptness, bristling with rocks on either side. The carriage of the Empress was heavy, and the horses spirited and intractable. Feeling the descending pressure, they took their bits in their mouths, and rushed down the steep declivity between the rocks with an impetuosity that threatened every moment to upset the carriage and dash it to pieces. The efforts of the Tartars to stop them were vain, and dismay filled every heart. Catherine alone remained calm and unmoved, without betraying the slightest symptoms of fear. At last, after dragging the carriage over some pieces of rock, they stopped, of their own accord, at the entering of a street, so suddenly, that some of them fell, and, but for the exertions of the Tartar horsemen, the carriage must have been upset in passing over their bodies. Happily the danger was averted, and the Empress was conducted to the palace of the Khans, where all the persons composing her suite took up their abode.

In each apartment, the only piece of furniture was a large and commodious divan, or raised dais, that went round the whole room. A large square basin of white marble occupied the centre, in which a fountain incessantly played, sending forth cool and sparkling jets of water. A feeble light illuminated

the apartments, passing through small panes obscured with paint; and, even when they were opened, the daylight could scarcely find its way through the branches of rose-bushes, laurels, jessamines, pomegranates, and orange-trees, which covered the windows with their foliage, and served as a sort of natural window-blind and screen.

Catherine only stayed five days at Bachtchi-Sarai, and enjoyed, with the pride of a sovereign and the delight of a woman, the pleasure of occupying the throne of the Tartars, hitherto the conquerors and the lords of Russia, who, only a few years before their final overthrow, had ravaged its provinces, disturbed its commerce, devastated its recent conquests, and rendered their possession insecure.

Leaving Bachtchi-Sarai, they passed through pleasant valleys, and crossed the Cabarta, which may be compared to a continuous garden, watered by streams of great beauty. Next they came to Inkerman, anciently called Theodosia by the Greeks; there is the ancient Kherson, and the city on which the Empress had conferred the name of Sevastopol. The sight of the coasts of the Tauris, formerly consecrated to Hercules and Diana, awakened in the minds of the travellers their recollections of ancient Greek fable, the story of the kings of the Bosphorus, and the exploits of Mithridates at the extremity of a cape seen rising to a point above the tempestuous waves that dash themselves at its foot. The imagination seeks to discover the ancient temple consecrated there to

Diana, but every vestige of classic art and faith has given place to the evidences of a power, which now, after the lapse of two thousand years, may justly be pronounced barbarian, in comparison with that which so long before preceded it in the occupation of this remarkable peninsula.

At Karason Bazar, another elegant palace, built in the centre of a garden of vast extent, laid out in the English fashion, awaited the Empress. This, also, was the work of the Prince Potemkin. When she descended into the garden, in the evening, to enjoy the coolness of the shade, the sparkling play of the waters, and the perfume of the flowers, she suddenly beheld all the hills within a circle of five leagues in diameter, lighted up with three lines of fires of different colours : a conically shaped hill in the centre of this dazzling horizon, exhibited in letters of light the cypher of the Empress ; and, from the summit, a magnificent display of fireworks was made, at the close of which a *feu-de-joie* of three hundred thousand muskets added another of those magnificent but puerile spectacles, with which the governors of Russian provinces are accustomed to divert the attention of their Emperors from the affairs and interests of their subjects.

The day after this fete, the pomp of which triumphed for a moment over the usual apathy of the Mussulmans, Catherine returned to the mountain district, and directed her course to Soudark, whose vines and fruits of all kinds, occupying a valley of nearly three

leagues in extent, are preferred to all others in the peninsula. The royal party stopped for a short while at Star Krium, formerly Karkoupool, which was, in the thirteenth century, one of the principal cities in the Tauris. A little further on, they came to the walls, or rather the ruins of the celebrated and unfortunate Theodosia, called by the Tartars Kerim Stambouly (the Constantinople of the Crimea), and to which Catherine restored the ancient name, but without the hope of reviving its ancient splendour. One or two inhabitants only were seen wandering amid the silent ruins.

The Empress was deeply moved by a spectacle that formed such a melancholy contrast to the magic scenes that had hitherto met her view : it seemed as if fate had willed to abate the proud feelings awakened by her triumphal progress, by presenting at its termination these memorials of the vicissitudes of human things, and of the destruction that must overtake, in their turn, the most flourishing cities, and which even the mightiest empires cannot escape.

It was the intention of the Empress to follow the line of coast in her return northwards, and to push forward to the Sea of Azpoh ; but the advanced season of the year, the unhealthy nature of the coast, and the necessity of return without delay to the capital, determined her to modify somewhat the course she had at first proposed to pursue. Theodosia was, in consequence, the terminating point of this progress ; the cortege regained Kremenschuk, and rested some

days at Moscow. The Empress arrived at Czarskoye, on the 22d of July, after paying a second visit to the pretty town of Tver, to Waldai, and the celebrated Novogorod, the most ancient of the five successive capitals of Russia, which owed its existence to the conquering genius of Rurik.

Among the persons who accompanied the successor of the great Peter in this triumphant progress through her dominions, was Joseph II., Emperor of Austria, under the name of Count Falkenstein.

Several members of the diplomatic body also formed part of the imperial cortege, particularly the brilliant Count de Segur, ambassador of France, who has left an account of this journey, as attractive in its style as it is learned and ingenious, and from which the chief portions of the description now presented to the reader are derived. We shall quote at length the concluding words of his narrative :—This long and singular journey, which had presented to us in succession the appearance of an immense gallery, adorned with pictures the most varied and novel, being at last brought to a close, I took leave of the Empress, and returned to St. Petersburg, to resume the course of a diplomatic life, but which I felt for some time to be tame and monotonous, after the exciting scenes I had quitted. It seemed, indeed, like exchanging the rapid and varied action of romance for the grave and sober realities of history.

No longer moving in that charmed circle, I do not now witness every instant, as in our triumphal and

romantic course, constant objects of interest: fleets created, as it were, in a moment; squadrons of Cossacks and Tartars flocking in from the depths of Asia; lines of road gleaming with blazing piles; mountains in a blaze; enchanted palaces; gardens springing up in a night; wild caverns; temples of Diana; nomade tribes, camels, and dromedaries, wandering in the desert; hospodars of Wallachia; dethroned princes of the Caucasus; persecuted kings of Georgia; all tendering their homage and addressing their petitions to the Queen of the North.

I must now return to the dry calculations of political science and discussions in diplomacy, in which are weighed as in scales—and these sometimes partially adjusted—the great interests of the world, the fate of nations, and the lives of men.

But if these presented to my view only matters of the most common-place interest, I was destined to receive, on my arrival, news from the West, too visibly announcing the advent of an era, which was to be marked by a revolution, the mightiest the world had yet seen, in the opinions, the laws, and the manners of men, and by the new forces that were to be brought into play in the affairs of social life: all fitted to awaken reflections, hopes, and fears, of a character widely different from the feelings inspired by this short and brilliant dream of the Tauris—this new chapter in the thousand and one nights, the illusion of which has just been dispelled.

CHAPTER VII.

RUSSIA AS IT IS.

It is a singular problem which the student of history now sees working out in modern Russia. In the stories gleaned, in previous pages, from the life and times of Peter the Great, we witness the regenerator of the old Muscovite kingdom contending within with the barbarism of his people; while he struggled without against the national foes, and sought, from the spoils of his enemies, to wrest the means for supplying the geographical deficiencies of the country. From Sweden, he snatched the ports of the Baltic, thereby securing a place among the commercial and maritime powers of Europe; while, from Holland and England, he sought to derive the arts, along with the interchanges of commercial relations, by which the real progress of the country could best be promoted. But wonderful as were the changes which he effected, it is surprising how much of them depended on his own personal will and sustaining power; and it was scarcely possible that he should find a successor fit to supply his place. His territorial acquisitions, and the victories obtained over foreign foes, were not difficult of imitation by imperial successors; but his greatest conquests, over internal barbarism and national prejudices, almost ceased to be thought of when their originator was laid in the grave, or at best only survived, in what may be styled the material aspect of

fleets, armies, and colossal edifices; while the moral changes he aimed at were despised or forgotten.

Yet, with all this, the influence of Peter on Russia was no transitory one. Some of the stories narrated in previous chapters, sufficiently illustrate the wonderful transformations effected on his country by the great Czar; while the narrative occupying the immediately preceding pages, depicts the aspect of the newest portion of the mighty empire over which the Empress Catherine ruled with no relaxing sway. Yet, after all, the results of Peter's great life-work prove nothing so certainly as that it is a much simpler thing to transform the waste marshes of the Neva into the splendid capital of St. Petersburg, than to convert the barbarian Muscovite into a civilized member of the great European community of people.

A striking example of the courage of Peter's latest successor, the present Emperor Nicholas, serves to show how little has been the real change effected on the ignorant and servile populace: "At the time when the cholera, imported overland from India, had spread in Russia with a malignity which tempered as it travelled westwards, its fearful ravages amongst the population so worked upon the popular terror and ignorance, that they imagined it to be, not a disease, but the effect of poison; some versions taxing the foreigners and the Poles, others the doctors and the authorities, with having conspired to destroy the people. To such a pitch were the passions of the populace inflamed, that they broke through all bounds.

in the agony of their fear and suspicious rage, and proceeded to those outrages which, if not peculiar to slaves released from their chain, almost invariably mark their conduct. All over Russia, but particularly in St. Petersburg, an indiscriminate massacre of all connected with the medical profession took place; the doctors were hurled out of windows, their heads carried on pikes, their bodies torn to shreds, and the police and authorities everywhere sought shelter in concealment. The same superstitious prejudices had invaded the ranks of the soldiers; the fearful ravages of the pestilence put an end to order, and all men felt like the crew of a ship about to go to pieces—released from restraint before the face of death. The mob were thus allowed to proceed from one extravagancy to another, till the Emperor rode out alone into the midst of their infuriated ranks, and by the courage and presence of mind he displayed, succeeded in bridling in a few minutes the menacing and unshackled monster. Addressing the rioters in the sternest tones of his sonorous voice, he commanded them to ‘kneel in the dust, and endeavour to propitiate the wrath of the Almighty, who had sent this visitation for their sins, and not increase his anger by their lawless conduct.’

The crowd, awed by his imposing and majestic manner, kneeled down as one man, followed him in the prayer which he offered up, and, quite humbled by his subsequent reprimand, returned to order and obedience.”

But indeed the vices and degrading characteristics which render the Muscovite population so low in the scale of nations, is clearly traceable to the demoralizing influence of a despotic government, characterized by all the vices, and by few, if any, of the redeeming traits of Oriental despotism. For ages not only has the Russian serf been subjected to a servitude so absolute that he is sold along with the land as regularly as the cattle that graze the fields, but the tyrant who is thus the absolute arbiter of his destiny is himself a slave. It is this position of the Russian noble which confers so hopeless a character on the hotbed civilization of Russia. He may be justly styled the abject serf of the Czar. He dared not leave Russia, even for the briefest tour, without the Imperial permission; and so arbitrarily and rigidly is this enforced, that when the great exhibition of the works of all nations took place in the Crystal Palace at London in 1851, some of the merchants of Russia, but none of its nobles, were permitted to visit it; the Emperor deciding for them, precisely as might be done for so many children, that a sight of it might be of use to the merchant class, but could not avail the nobles for any good purpose. In this respect the policy of Peter the Great is entirely reversed. "Encouraged," says the author already quoted, "so long to travel, that the desire of visiting foreign countries has become, with all the higher orders, a predominant passion, the present Emperor places many obstacles in the way of all who wish to go abroad,

and obliges them to return at the expiration of three years, under pain of forfeiting their property and rank. To many the permission to leave the country is altogether refused, and in every case it is only renewed with the utmost difficulty.

It is said, in defence of these summary measures against absenteeism, that without them most of the wealthy Russians would quit their own country, and scatter their wealth over Europe; and this is a highly probable supposition, which, when their unenviable condition at home is considered, can scarcely be matter of surprise." The nobles, moreover, are, as a body, the mere creatures of the Emperor. The old Norman barons and Saxon thanes, from whom our ancient British peerage has sprung, were the equals of the kings in rank, disputed with them on common ground, and warred with them when needs were, with no sense on either side of the just limits of their rank being overstepped. Hence the struggles of the barons to maintain their rights kept the Crown in check, or forced the king to exalt the Commons as a counter-vailing power. It is altogether different with the Russian noble. His origin is most frequently thoroughly Oriental. The late Pasha of Egypt was the son of a slave, and in his early life a humble trader of tobacco. Such a pedigree might suit hundreds of those who in Russia enjoy all the rights and privileges which attach to its peerage. "The present laws of the empire," says the author of "Revelations of Russia," "confer the distinction of a Russian noble

on every individual in the service of the crown, who holds a rank, civil or military, equivalent to that of a commissioned officer.


This nobility of office are designated by the title of '*chenovniks*,' or men of rank. The lowest of these who sits behind the desk of a public office, is equally a nobleman with the wealthy descendant of the compeers of the house of Romanoff, and is entitled to all the privileges which the proudest descent confers, including the qualification of becoming a baron or master of slaves, should promotion in office, by giving more ample scope for extortion and public robbery, ever afford him the means of purchasing them.

The type of this class may be seen in every government office—a personage, who sits in a coat with the imperial button, his green or purple velvet collar designating the department to which he is attached; but who, beneath this insignia of his rank, eschews a shirt, who wraps his feet in a tattered rag instead of stockings, using his fingers for a pocket-hankerchief, and smelling strongly of *vodka* (corn-brandy) and onions. He must be addressed as '*vashe blagarodié*,' 'your nobility.' He rejoices in a salary of L.15 per annum, and maintains the dignity of the imperial service by unblushingly pocketing a bribe of a grivnik, a coin of the value of threepence half-penny English, without which, if you have occasion to ask him even a question, he will not open his lips. This class of employés are to be found of every grade—from the individual just described, up to the minister of the

imperial court, whose salary is L.4000, and who is calculated to sell his favours at L.100,000 per annum more; they differ, indeed, in fortune and in external refinement, but in point of corruption, venality, and servility, may be unhesitatingly ranked together.

The landed proprietors, with the exception of an inconsiderable portion who have obtained possession of slaves and land in the manner above alluded to, are the immediate descendants of those turbulent Boyars, of whom we read so much in the early history of Russia; a feudal and wealthy aristocracy, plunged in all the excesses of ignorance and barbarity, and formidable only to their Czars, until the time when Peter the Great not only reduced them to obedience, but commenced depriving them of every valuable privilege—a work which his successors have followed up so perseveringly and unremittingly, as to have reduced them to the most degraded condition of any landed aristocracy or people in Europe.

In pursuance of this system of policy, nothing was left them but their wealth, of which probably they were not stripped, from the conviction that their general tendency to luxury and extravagance—another Oriental feature in their character, and which all the additional temptations to profusion offered by civilization could only increase—would rapidly tend to the ruin and dissipation of their fortunes; a provision which is daily being realized, and for the facilitation of which government has carefully provided. The Crown is always ready to advance money on slaves



and estates, which is seldom repaid, and eventually enables it to gather them into its own domains.

Originally encouraged by every possible means to visit foreign countries, and to intermingle with the subjects of more civilized nations, and naturally gifted with considerable aptitude for imitation, this class took readily, and at once, the superficial impress of that civilization with which it came in contact, and exhibits, without its valuable substratum, all the polish which should be the finishing varnish of the picture, not, as it is, a gloss to cover its defects. It has adopted the tone, the manners, the elegance, and external refinement of the best society of other countries, with which those who travel have principally mingled, and which they have widely disseminated amongst the ranks of the untravelled class at home; but has acquired little of its solid instruction, and still less of those feelings inherited by other nations from the chivalrous institutions which for so many centuries tempered their feudal darkness, tinging the public mind unconsciously with an admiration for what was noble, an abhorrence of what was base.

It is to this cause that the feeling may be traced, animating even the lowest and most brutalized members of a British mob, when they will not tolerate any unfair superiority in a street contest, or a blow inflicted on a fallen man. It is to this cause that we may trace the feelings which, in Britain and other European countries, make those in the most abject condition blush at being detected in a lie, and which,

if chivalry owe its partial development to Christianity, must be admitted to have acted more directly on the civilization of the modern world than Christianity has done in any other way.

This is a groundwork of character unknown in Russia, where feudality existed, but chivalry never. That keen and vivid sense of honour, to which in France and England all classes are so generally sensitive, though each in their peculiar station in a different degree, and which we are apt, before we compare them with those countries where the causes from which they are derived never existed, to attribute to their intuitive perceptions of right and wrong, is in Russia everywhere wanting, both amongst high and low."

It was a bold and not unwise scheme for beginning the civilization of the Muscovite, when Peter the Great put a tax on his beard, and strove to force him into some external assimilation with the civilized nations of western Europe. But, after all, it was at best little more than a washing of the outside of the platter. The external proprieties of personal cleanliness and attention to dress, when voluntarily performed, are valuable as the indices of other and more valuable traits. But the mere shaving and dressing of a savage will no more suffice to civilize him than they will transform a monkey into a man. It has accordingly been remarked by the Marquis de Custine, whose keen eye saw through much of the superficial gloss of modern Russian civilization, that

the palace of the Russian noble is frequently crowded with the appliances of English and French civilization, of which its owner can make no use, while, beneath his own showy Parisian dressing-gown, the curious eye may catch a glimpse of the coarse, dirty shirt, and other still more unmistakeable indications of what Napoleon indicated in his shrewd observation, "*Grattez le Russe et vous trouverez le Tartare.*" "Graze the Russian, and you will find the Tartar peep through." He is indeed still to a great extent the savage, with only the outside trappings of civilization, and as usual with such, he has shown himself more expert at copying the vices than the virtues of his models. Placed thus in contact with nations which have slowly and naturally advanced to their present high condition, he stands doubly at a disadvantage, being neither capable of rightly profiting by their example, nor of partaking of the natural development of his own faculties, if left freely to manifest themselves under the healthful stimulus of an enlarged sphere and increasing facilities of action. Napoleon showed his juster estimate of the true means of civilizing such a people when he exclaimed, "Woe to Europe if ever a Czar should arise who wears a beard!" Such a man would have forty millions of serfs to follow him blindly for every purpose he might plan.

CHAPTER VIII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF ST. PETERSBURG.

HAVING described some of the first steps which marked the rise of St. Petersburg amid the marshes of the Neva, we shall now glance at its present aspect, and the civilization which has actually sprung up from the indefatigable labours and indomitable will of its founder.

It is thus that a recent traveller communicates to us his recollections of the capital of the great Czar. "Having made my arrangements for visiting the Russian capital, I set sail from Stockholm in a steamer, along with a miscellaneous assemblage of Swedes, Germans, French, English, and even Americans. As we steamed northward, we dashed through archipelago after archipelago of islands, some with bold and rocky shores, and others sloping greenly down to the tranquil sea. Having passed the Aland Islands, one of which, not thirty miles from the coast of Sweden, has been seized and strongly fortified by her powerful and unscrupulous neighbour, we turned into a narrow inlet, and touched Russian soil at Abo, the ancient capital of Finland.

Here we made our first acquaintance with those agents whom his Imperial Majesty deposes to watch that nothing treasonable or contraband finds entrance into his dominions. Our intercourse here was, how-

ever, brief, our passports merely being demanded, and permission granted us to go on shore, while the steamer was detained. At Cronstadt and St. Petersburg we formed a more intimate, if not more agreeable, acquaintance with these functionaries. Setting out again, we coasted eastward up the Gulf of Finland, passing the grim fortress of Sveaborg, with its eight hundred guns, and garrison of fifteen thousand men, and shot up the beautiful bay to Helsingfors, one of the great naval stations of Russia. Touching at Revel, on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Finland, we ran due east up the Gulf, encountering the great Russian summer fleet, which was performing its annual manœuvres, and on the morning after leaving Helsingfors, came in sight of the shipping and fortifications of Cronstadt. As we crept slowly up the narrow and winding channel by which alone the harbour can be reached, and passed successively the grim lines of batteries which command every portion of it, we were forced to confess that it formed a fitting outpost to a great military power.

Cronstadt is not only the chief naval depot of Russia, but is properly the port of St. Petersburg, as the capital is inaccessible to vessels drawing more than eight or nine feet of water. Hence Cronstadt is included in the St. Petersburg customs district, and vessels clear indifferently for either, and are subject to only a single custom-house examination. It forms the key to the capital, which would be entirely at the mercy of any fleet which should once pass its

batteries. It has therefore been fortified so strongly as to be apparently impregnable to all the navies of the world. We came to anchor under the guns of the fortress, and were soon put under the charge of our amiable friends of the custom-house, who took complete possession of the deck, while the passengers and officers of the vessel were directed to repair to the cabin to give an account of themselves, their occupations, pursuits, and designs, to these rude and filthy representatives of the Czar. It was well for us that we had been in a measure hardened to these annoyances by our previous continental experiences. Police and custom-house functionaries are nowhere famous for civility, but the rudest and most unendurable specimens of that class whom it has ever been my fortune to encounter are the lower orders of the Russian officials. We could, however, congratulate ourselves, that the infliction was light in comparison to what it would have been had we proceeded by land from Abo. There, trunks, pockets, and pocket-books, are liable to repeated searches at different stations along the route. We were told of travellers who had their boxes of tooth-powder carefully emptied, and their soap-balls cut in two, in quest of something treasonable or contraband.

But there is an end to all things human—even to Russian police examinations. Our passports were luckily all in order, and as our steamer was cleared for St. Petersburg, we escaped the vexations attendant upon an inspection of luggage and a change of

vessel. Everything was put under seal, even to an ancient umbrella which had borne the brunt of many a shower in half the countries of Europe.

After our seven hours' detention, we found ourselves at last steaming up the transparent Neva, and straining our eyes to get a first view of the city of Peter. After something more than an hour's paddling against the rapid current of the river, the gilt dome of the Cathedral first caught the eye, followed by the sight of dome after dome, tower upon tower, spire after spire, gilt and spangled with azure stars, long before the flat roofs and walls of the city were visible.

No sooner had our steamer touched the granite *quai* than it was taken possession of by a horde of custom-house and police officers, a shade or two less filthy and disgusting than their Cronstadt brethren; for it is a noticeable fact, the higher you proceed in official grade, the more endurable do the Russian officials become, till you reach the heads of the departments, who are as civil and well-behaved a body of functionaries as ever clasped fingers upon a bribe. A few coopecks or roubles, as the case may require, insinuated into the expectant palms of the searching officials, have a wonderful tendency to abate the rigour of the examinations, which being completed, and a silver rouble paid to the officer in attendance, the traveller is at liberty to go on shore in search of a hotel or lodgings.

The instructed traveller will resist the seductions

of the Russian hotels, with their magnificent fronts, and Russian, German, and French sign-boards; for once past the portals, he will find that the noble staircases and broad passages, the damask curtains and velvet sofas, are dirty beyond all description. If he be wise, he will make his way to some boarding-house upon the *Quai Anglais*, conducted by an emigrant from some country where the primitive faith in the virtues of dusters, and soap and water, is cherished.

No sooner is the stranger established than he must take an interpreter, and make the best of his way to the police-office, to get a permit of residence. This he obtains after an interrogation from a very civil functionary, to whom must be paid a proportionate fee. But this permit is good only for the capital and its immediate vicinity. If the Russians are slow to welcome the coming, they are none the more ready to speed the parting guest. The traveller must not leave the capital till he has published an advertisement announcing his intention in three successive numbers of the Gazette, an operation which consumes a space of from a week to ten days.

These preliminaries duly attended to, we were at liberty to commence our examination of St. Petersburg. The traveller who first sees the city under a summer sun is always struck with amazement. Its public places are so vast, its monuments so numerous and imposing, its quays so magnificent, and its edifices, public and private, so enormous, and constructed apparently of materials so massive and enduring, that

he is ready to pronounce it the most magnificent city upon earth.

A century and a half ago the low marshy shores of the Neva, and the islands formed by the branches into which it separates just before it empties itself into the Gulf of Finland, were inhabited only by a few scattered Finnish fishermen. But commanding the entrance to Lake Ladoga, it was a military position of some importance, and the Swedes had long maintained there a fortress, the possession of which had been often unavailingly contested by the Russians, up to 1703, when Peter the Great made himself master of it. He determined to found upon this desolate spot the future capital of his vast empire, and at once commenced the task, without waiting for peace to confirm the possession of the site. He assembled a vast number of the peasantry from every quarter of his empire, and pushed forward the work with the energy of an iron will, armed with absolute power. The surrounding country, ravaged by long years of war, could furnish no supplies for these enormous masses, and the convoys which brought them across Lake Ladoga were frequently detained by contrary winds. Ill fed, and worse lodged, labouring in the cold and wet, multitudes yielded to the hardships, and the foundations of the new metropolis were laid at the cost of a hundred thousand lives, sacrificed in less than six months.

With Peter, to will was to perform ; he willed that a capital city should be built and inhabited, and built

and inhabited it was. In April 1714, a ukase was issued directing that all buildings should be erected in a particular manner; another, three months later, ordered a large number of nobles and merchants to erect dwellings in the new city. In a few months more another ukase prohibited the erection of any stone mansion in any other portion of the empire, while the enterprise of the capital was in progress; and that the lack of building materials should be no obstacle, every vessel, whether large or small, and every peasant's car which came to the city, was ordered to bring a certain specified number of building stones. The work, undertaken with such rigid determination, and carried on with such remorseless vigour by Peter, was continued in the same unflinching spirit by his successors; and the result was the present St. Petersburg, with its aspect more imposing than that of any other city on the globe, but bearing in its bosom the elements of its own destruction, the moment it is freed from the control of the iron will which created and now maintains it—a fitting type and representative of the Russian Empire.

The whole enterprise of founding and maintaining St. Petersburg was and is a struggle against nature. The soil is a marsh so deep and spongy that a solid foundation can be attained only by constructing a subterranean scaffolding of piles. Were it not for these, the city would sink into the marsh like a stage ghost through the trap-door. Every building of any magnitude rests on piles; the granite quays which line

the Neva rest on piles. The very foot-pavements cannot be laid upon the ground, but must be supported by piles. A great commercial city is maintained, the harbour of which is as inaccessible to ships for six months in the year, as the centre of the desert of Sahara. In the neighbouring country no part produces anything for human sustenance save the Neva, which furnishes ice and fish. The severity of the climate is most destructive to the erections of human hands; and St. Petersburg, notwithstanding its gay summer appearance, when it emerges from the winter frosts, resembles a superannuated belle at the close of the fashionable season; and can only be put in proper visiting order by the assiduous services of hosts of painters and plasterers. Leave the capital for half a century to the unrepaired ravages of its wintry climate, and it would need a Layard to unearth its monuments.

But sure as are the wasting inroads of time and the climate, St. Petersburg is in daily peril of an overthrow whose accomplishment would require but a few hours. The Gulf of Finland forms a vast funnel pointing eastward, at the extremity of which stands the city. No portion of the city is fifteen feet above the ordinary level of the water. A strong westerly wind, blowing directly into the mouth of the funnel, piles the water up so as to lay the lower part of the city under water. Water is as much dreaded here, and as many precautions are taken against it, as in the case of fire in other cities. In other cities

alarm-signals announce a conflagration; here they give notice of an inundation. The firing of an alarm-gun from the Admiralty, at intervals of an hour, denotes that the lower extremes of the islands are under water, when flags are hung out from the steeples to give warning of danger. When the water reaches the streets, alarm-guns are fired every quarter of an hour. As the water rises the alarms grow more and more frequent, until minute-guns summon boats to the assistance of the drowning population.

Such is the danger which menaces the Russian capital on its lower side; now for the upper:—Lake Ladoga, which discharges its waters through the Neva, is frozen over to an enormous thickness during the long winter. The rapid northern spring raises its waters and loosens the ice simultaneously; when the waters of the Gulf are at their usual level, the accumulated ice and water find an easy outlet down the broad and rapid Neva. But let a strong west wind heap up the waters of the Gulf just as the breaking up of Lake Ladoga takes place, and the waters from above and from below would suffice to inundate the whole city, while all its palaces, monuments, and temples, would be crushed between the masses of ice. Nothing is more probable than such a coincidence. It often blows from the west for days together in the spring; and it is almost a matter of certainty that the ice will break up between the middle and the end of April. Let but a westerly storm arise on the fatal day of that brief fortnight,

and farewell to the city of the Czars. St. Petersburg will be sunk deeper than plummet can sound in the Finnish marshes, from which it has so magically risen.

Nor is this merely a matter of theory and speculation. Terrible inundations, involving enormous destruction of life and property, have occurred. The most destructive of these took place on the 17th of November 1824. A strong west wind heaped the waters of the Gulf up into the narrow funnel of the Neva, and poured them, slowly at first, along the streets. As night began to close in, the rise of the waters became more and more rapid. Cataracts poured into doors, windows, and cellars. The sewers spouted up columns, like whales in the death-agony. The streets were filled with abandoned equipages, and deserted horses struggling in the rising waters. The trees in the public squares were crowded with those who had climbed them for refuge. During the night the wind abated, and the waters receded. But the pecuniary damage of that one night is estimated at five millions of pounds sterling, and the loss of lives at eight thousand. All through the city a painted line traced upon the walls designates the height to which the waters reached. Were ever house-painters before engaged upon a task so ghastly? But suppose that, instead of November, April had been the date of this inundation, when the waters from the Lake above had met those from the Gulf below, St. Petersburg would have been numbered among the things that were.

Nothing of the kind can be more imposing than the view of St. Petersburg from the tower of the Admiralty, upon some bright June day, such as that on which I first beheld it. Under foot, as it seemed from the galleries, lay the Admiralty-yards, where great ships were in process of erection, destined for no nobler service than to perform their three months summer cruise in the Baltic, and to be frozen immovably in the harbours for six months out of twelve. The will of the Czar can effect much, but it cannot convert Russia into a naval power until he can secure a seacoast, and harbours which cannot be shut up to him by a single hostile fortification. Russia cannot be a maritime power till she is mistress of the entrance to the Baltic and the Black Sea.

To the right and the left of the Admiralty stretch the great squares, upon which stand the principal public edifices and monuments of the capital; the Winter Palace, with its six thousand constant occupants; the *Hotel de l'Etat Major*, whence go forth orders to a million of soldiers; the Senate House, and the Palace of the Holy Synod, the centres of temporal and spiritual law for the hundred nations blended into the Russian Empire; the Church of St. Isaac, with its four porticoes, the lofty columns of which, sixty feet in height, are each of a single block of granite, and the walls of polished marble; its cupola, covered with copper overlaid with gold, gleaming like another sun, surmounted by a golden cross, and forming the most conspicuous object to the

approaching visiter, whether he comes up the Gulf, or across the dreary Finnish marshes; yet, high as it rises in the air, it sinks scarcely a less distance below the ground, so deep was it necessary to drive into the marsh the forest of piles upon which it rests, before a firm foundation could be secured. Here is the statue of Peter—the finest equestrian statue in the world—reining his steed upon the brink of the precipice up which he has urged it, his hand stretched out in benediction toward the Neva, the pride of his new-founded city. Here is the triumphal column to Alexander, ‘the Restorer of Peace,’ the whole elevation of which is 150 feet, measuring to the head of the angel who bears the symbol of the Christian faith—the cross victorious over the crescent—above the capital, cast from cannon captured from the Turks. The shaft is a single block eighty-four feet in height—the largest single stone erected in modern times; and it would have been still loftier had it not been for the blind, unreasoning obedience to orders, so characteristic of the Russian. When the column had been determined upon, orders were despatched to the quarries to detach, if possible, a single block for the shaft of the length of eighty-four feet, though with scarcely a hope that the attempt would succeed. One day a despatch was received by the Czar from the superintendent, with the tidings that a block had been detached, free from flaw, one hundred feet long; but that he was about to proceed to reduce it to the required length. The sovereign mounted in hot

haste to save the block from mutilation, and to preserve a column so much exceeding his hopes; but he was too late, and arrived just in time to see the sixteen feet severed from the block, which would otherwise have been the noblest shaft in the world.

The length of these public places, open and in full view, right and left, from the Admiralty Tower, is a full mile.

Stretching southward from the tower lies the 'Great Side' of St. Petersburg, cut into three concentric semicircular divisions, of which the Admiralty is the centre, by three canals, and intersected by three main avenues. These three Perspectives, or *Prospekts*, as they are called, diverge like the spokes of a wheel from the Admiralty, and run straight through the city, through the sumptuous quarters of the aristocracy, the domains of commerce, and the suburbs of the poor; while the view is closed by the mists rising from the swamps of Ingermanland.

Turning from the 'Great Side,' and looking northward, the arms of the Neva diverge from near the foot of the Admiralty Tower, as the Perspectives do from the southern side. The width of the Neva, its yielding bottom and shores, and the masses of ice which it sweeps down, make the erection of bridges so difficult that they are placed at very rare intervals, so that a person might be obliged to go miles before reaching one. But the stream is enlivened by boats and gondolas, ready to convey passengers from one bank to the other. We were never weary of watch-

ing with a glass from the Admiralty Tower, alternately, the river, gay with boats and shipping, and the Perspectives, thronged with their brilliant and motley crowd. With a somewhat different, but certainly no less absorbing interest, we gazed down, from the same elevation, into the works of the citadel, upon Petersburg Island, whose minutest details were clearly visible. This citadel is useless as a defence of the city against a hostile attack; but it furnishes a ready means of commanding the capital, and supplies a refuge for the government in case of an insurrection. Like the fortifications of Paris, it is designed not so much to defend as to control the city.

St. Petersburg is certainly the most imposing city, and Russia is the most imposing nation, in the world—at first sight. But the imposing aspect of both is, to a great extent, an *imposition*. The city tries to pass itself off for granite, when a great proportion is of wood or brick, covered with paint and stucco, which peels off in masses before the frosts of every winter, and needs a whole army of plasterers and painters every spring to put it in presentable order. You pass what appears a Grecian temple, and lo, it is only a screen of painted boards! A one-storeyed house assumes the airs of a loftier building, in virtue of a front of another storey bolted and braced to its roof. And much even that is real is sadly out of place. Long lines of balconies, and pillars, and porticoes, which would be appropriate to Greece or Italy, are, for the greater part of the year, piled with snow-


drifts. St. Petersburg and Russian civilization are both of a growth too hasty, and too much controlled from without, instead of proceeding from a law of inward development, to be enduring.

The capital, to be seen to advantage, must be viewed during the few weeks of early summer, or in the opening winter, when the snow forms a pavement better than art can produce, and when the cold has built a continuous bridge over the Neva, without having as yet become severe enough to drive every body from the streets.

The Neva is the main artery through which pours the life-blood of St. Petersburg. But the life-current is checked from the time when the ice is too far weakened by the returning sun to be passable, and not yet sufficiently broken up to float down to the Gulf. At that time, all intercourse between portions of the city on its opposite banks is suspended. Everybody is anxious for the breaking-up of the ice. Luxuries from more genial climes are waiting in the Baltic for the river to be navigable. No sooner is the ice so far cleared as to afford a practicable passage for a boat, than the glad news is announced by the artillery of the citadel, and, no matter what the hour, the commandant and his suite hurry into a gondola, and push over to the Imperial Palace, directly opposite. The commandant fills a large goblet with the icy fluid, and presents it to the Emperor, informing him that his gondola, the first which has that year crossed the river, is the precursor of

navigation. The Czar drains the cup to the health of the capital, and returns it, filled with ducats, to the commandant. Formerly it was observed, by some mysterious law of natural science, that this goblet grew larger and larger, year by year, so that the Czar stood in danger of suffocation from his growing bumpers. Some wise man at last suggested that this tendency to the enlargement of the goblet might be counteracted, by limiting the number of ducats returned by way of acknowledgment. The suggestion was acted upon, and, greatly to the comfort of the imperial purse and stomach, was found to be perfectly successful. The sum now given is two hundred ducats. This goblet of Neva water is surely the most costly draught ever quaffed since the time when Cleopatra dissolved the pearl in honour of Mark Antony.

The most striking winter spectacle of St. Petersburg, to a foreigner, is that of the ice mountains. They are in full glory during 'Butter Week,' of which more anon, when Russia seems to forget her desire to be anything but Russian. The great Place of the Admiralty is given up to the popular celebrations, and filled with refreshment-booths, swings, and slides. To form these ice mountains, a narrow scaffold is raised to the height of some thirty or forty feet. This scaffold has on one side steps for the purpose of ascending it; on the other it slopes off, steeply at first, and then more gradually, until it finally terminates on a level. Upon this long slope blocks of



ice are laid, over which water is poured, which by freezing unites the blocks, and furnishes a uniform surface, down which the merry crowd slide upon sledges, or more frequently upon blocks of smooth ice cut into an appropriate form.

Two of these mountains usually stand opposite and fronting each other, their tracks lying close together, side by side.

This is a national amusement all over Russia. Ice mountains are raised in the court-yards of all the chief residents in the capital. And an imitation of them, for summer use, covered with some polished wood, instead of ice, is often found in the halls of private dwellings. In the imperial palace there is such a slide, built of mahogany.

Street-life in St. Petersburg presents many aspects strange to one who comes fresh from the capitals of other countries. One of the first things which will strike him is the silence and desertion of most of the streets. The thronging, eager crowd of other cities is unknown. There is room enough and to spare here. Broad streets, lined with rows of palaces, are as silent and lonely as deserted 'Tadmor, and a solitary *droszka* breaking the uniformity of the loneliness, heightens the effect. Leaving these broad, still streets, and mingling in the throng that presses in and through the Admiralty Place, the Nevskoi Perspective, or the Place of St. Isaac, the most noticeable feature, at first glance, is the preponderance of the military. The ordinary garrison of the

capital amounts to 60,000 men. The Russian army comprises an almost infinite variety of uniforms, and specimens of these, worn by the *élite* of every corps, are constantly in the capital.

There are the Tartar guards, and the Circassian guards, Cossaks from the Don, from the Ural, and from Crimea. The wild Circassian, enacting the double part of soldier and hostage, silver-harnessed and mail-coated, alternates with the skin-clad Cossack of the Ural, darting, lance in rest, over the **parade-ground**. There are regiments uniform not only in size of the men, colour of the horses, and identity of equipments, but in the minutiae of personal appearance. Of one, all the men are pug-nosed, blue-eyed, and red-bearded; of another, every man has a nose like a hawk, with eyes, hair, and beard as black as a raven's wing. Half the male population of St. Petersburg wear uniform; for, besides these 60,000 soldiers, it is worn by officers of every grade, by the police, and even by professors of the university and teachers and pupils in the public schools.

Turning from the military to the civil portion of the population, the same brilliant variety of costumes everywhere meets the eye. The sober-suited native of western and civilized Europe jostles the brilliant silken robes of the Persian or Bokharian; the Chinaman flaunts his dangling pig-tail, ingeniously pieced out by artificial means, in the face of the smoothly-shorn Englishman; the white-toothed Arab meets the tobacco-stained German; Yankee sailors and

adventurers, portly English merchants, canny Scotchmen, dwarfish Finlanders, stupid Lettes, diminutive Kamtschatkans, each in his own national costume, make up a lively picture; while underlying all, and more worthy of note than all, are the true Russian peasantry—the original stock out of which Peter and his successors have fashioned their mighty empire.

The Russian of the lower orders is anything but an inviting personage at first sight. The name by which they have been designated, in their own language, time out of mind, describes them precisely. It is *tschornoï narod*, 'the dirty people.' An individual of this class is called a *mujik*. He is usually of middle stature, with small light eyes, level cheeks, and flat nose, of which the tip is turned up so as to display the somewhat expanded nostril. His pride and glory is his beard, which he wears as long and shaggy as nature will allow. The back of the head is shaved closely; and as he wears nothing about his neck, his head stands distinctly away from his body. His ideal of the beauty of the human head, as seen from behind, seems to be to make it resemble, as nearly as may be, a turnip. He is always noisy, and never clean; and when wrapped in his sheepskin mantle, or *caftan* of blue cloth, reaching to his knees, might easily enough be taken for a bandit. As he seldom thinks of changing his inner garments more than once a week, and as his outer raiment lasts half his lifetime, and is never laid aside during the night, and never washed, he constantly affords evidence of

his presence anything but agreeable to the organs of smell. But a closer acquaintance will bring to light many traits of character which belie his rude exterior, and will show him to be in reality a good-natured, merry, friendly fellow. His most striking characteristic is pliability and dexterity. If he does not possess the power of originating, he has a wonderful faculty of copying the ideas of others, and of yielding himself up to carry out the conceptions of any one who wishes to use him for the accomplishment of his ends. There is an old German myth which says that the Teutonic race was framed, in the depths of time, out of the hard, unyielding granite. The original material of the Russian race must have been Indian rubber, so easily are they compressed into any form, and so readily do they resume their own, when the pressure is removed. The raw, untrained *mujik* is drafted into the army, and in a few weeks attains a precision of movement more like an automaton than a human being. He becomes a trader, and the Jews themselves cannot match him in cunning and artifice.

The *mujik* is a thoroughly good-tempered fellow. Address him kindly, and his face unbends at once, and you will find that he takes a sincere delight in doing you a kindness. In no capital of Europe are the temptations to crimes against the person so numerous as in St. Petersburg, with its broad lonely streets, unlighted at night, and scantily patrolled; but in no capital are such crimes of so rare occurrence.

But the *mujik* has two faults. He is a thorough rogue, and a great drunkard. He will cheat and drink to excess, from sheer love for the practices; and without the least apparent feeling that there is anything out of the way in so doing. But in his cups he is the same good-natured fellow. The Irishman or Scotchman, when drunk, is quarrelsome and pugnacious; the German or the Englishman, stupid and brutal; the Spaniard or Italian, revengful and treacherous. The first stages of drunkenness in the *mujik* are manifested by loquacity. The drunker he is, the more gay and genial does he grow; till at last he is ready to throw himself upon the neck of his worst enemy, and exchange embraces with him. When the last stage has been reached, and he starts for his home, he does not reel, but marches straight on, till some accidental obstruction trips him up into the mire, where he lies unnoticed and unmolested, till a policeman takes charge of him. This misadventure is turned to public advantage, for, by an old custom, every person, male or female, of what grade soever, taken up drunk in the street by the police, is obliged the next day to sweep the streets for a certain number of hours. In our early rambles, we often came across a woeful group thus improving the ways of others, in punishment for having taken too little heed of their own.

Perhaps the most thoroughly Russian of all the *tschornoï narod* are the *izvoshtshiks*, or public drivers; at least they are the class with whom the traveller

comes most immediately and necessarily into contact, and from whom he derives his idea of them. Such is the extent of St. Petersburg, that when the foreigner has sated his curiosity with the general aspect of the streets, he finds that he cannot afford time to walk from one object of interest to another. Moreover, in winter—and here winter means fully six months in the year—the streets are spread with a thick covering of snow, which soon becomes beaten up into powdered crystals, through which locomotion is as difficult as through the deepest sands of Sahara; and the wind whirls these keen crystals about like the sand-clouds of the desert. Everybody, not to the manner born, whose pleasures or avocations call him abroad, is glad to draw his mantle over his face, and creeping into a sledge, wrap himself up as closely as he may in furs. In spring and summer, when the streets are usually either a marsh or choked with intolerable dust, pedestrianism is equally disagreeable. All this has called into requisition a host of Jehus, so that the stranger who has mastered enough Russian to call out *Davai ishvoshthik!* “Here, driver!” or even lifts his hand by way of signal, has seldom need to repeat the summons.

Like his cart-borne kindred, the Tartars and Scythians, the *ishvoshtshik* makes his vehicle his home. In it he eats, drinks, and often sleeps, rolling himself up into a ball in the bottom, to present as little surface as possible to the action of the cold. Russian-like, he always names a price for his services that

will leave ample room for abatement. But once engaged, he is, for the time being, your servant, and accepts any amount of abuse or beating as the natural condition of the bargain.

The *mujik*, of every class, seems indeed to be born ready bitted, for the use of any one who has a hand steady enough to hold the reins. They are the best servants in the world, for one who has the gift of command. It is this adaptation between the strong-willed autocrats who, since Peter, have swayed the destinies of Russia, and the serviceable nature of the people, that has raised the empire to its present position. A single weak ruler would change the whole destiny of Russia.

The native Russians have strong religious tendencies, though they smack a little too much of those of the light-fingered Smyrniote, whom we detected purchasing candles to light before his patron saint, with the first-fruits of the purse of which he had not ten minutes before relieved our pocket. In all places where men congregate, there are pictures of saints before which the *mujik* crosses himself on every occasion. In an inn, or restaurant, each visiter turns to the picture and crosses himself before he sits down to eat. If a *mujik* enters your room, he crosses himself before saluting you. Every church is saluted with a sign of the cross. At frequent intervals in the streets, little shrines are found, before which everybody stops and makes the sacred sign, with bared head. The merchant in the *gostinnoi dvor*, or bazaar,

every now and then walks up to his saint, and with a devout inclination, prays for success in trade.

No one has seen St. Petersburg, who has not been there at Easter. The Greek Church finds great virtues in fasting; and a prolonged fast-time implies a subsequent carnival. The rigour of the Russian fasts strictly excludes every article of food containing the least particle of animal matter. Flesh and fowl are, of course, rigorously *tabooed*; so are milk, eggs, butter; and even sugar, on account of the animal matter used in refining it, of which a small portion might possibly remain. The fast preceding Easter, called, by way of eminence, 'The Great Fast,' lasts seven full weeks, and is observed with a strictness unknown even in Catholic countries. The lower classes refrain even from fish during the first and last of these seven weeks, as well as on Wednesdays and Fridays in the remaining five. When we reflect how large a part some or all of these animal substances form of the *cuisine* of all northern nations, and in Russia most of all, we shall be ready to believe that this Great Fast is an important epoch in the Russian calendar, and is not to be encountered without a preparatory period of feasting, the recollection of which may serve to mitigate the enforced abstinence.

Among the upper classes in St. Petersburg, balls, routs, and all carnival revelries, begin to crowd thick and fast upon each other as early as the commencement of February. But the mass of the people compress these preparatory exercises into the week before

the beginning of the fast. This is the famous *Mas-slänitza*, or 'Butter Week,' which contains the sum and substance of all Russian festivity. All the butter that should naturally have gone into the consumption of the succeeding seven weeks is concentrated into this. Whatever can be eaten with butter is buttered; what can not, is rejected as unworthy of being used. The standard dish of the week is *blinni*, a kind of pancake, made with butter, fried in butter, and eaten with butter-sauce. For this one week, the great national dish of *shtshee*, or cabbage-soup, is banished from the land.

Breakfast despatched, then come the amusements. Formerly the swings, ice-mountains, and temporary theatres were erected upon the frozen plain of the Neva. But some years since, the ice gave way under the immense pressure, and a large number of the revellers were drowned. Since that time, the great square of the Admiralty has been devoted to this purpose. For days previous, long trains of sledges are seen thronging to the spot, bearing timbers, poles, planks, huge blocks of ice, and all the materials necessary for the erection of booths, theatres, swings, and slides. These temporary structures are easily and speedily reared. A hole is dug in the frozen ground, into which the end of a post is placed. It is then filled with water, which, under the influence of a Russian February, binds it in its place as firmly as though it were leaded into a solid rock. The carnival commences on the first Sunday of the Butter Week,

and all St. Petersburg gives itself up to sliding and swinging, or to watching the sliding and swinging of others. By a wise regulation, eating and drinking shops are not allowed in the square, and the staple potables and comestibles are tea, cakes, and nuts. Few more animated and stirring sights are to be seen than the Admiralty square at noon, when the mirth is at the highest among the lower orders, and when all the highest classes make their appearance driving in regular line along a broad space, in front of the booths, reserved for the equipages. Everybody in St. Petersburg of any pretensions to rank or wealth, keeps a carriage of some kind; and every carriage, crowded with the family in their gayest attire, joins in the procession.

Butter Week, with its *blinni* and ice mountains, passes away all too quickly, and is succeeded by the grim seven weeks' fast. The Admiralty square looks desolate enough, lumbered over with fragments of the late joyous paraphernalia, and strewn with nut-shells and orange-peel. Public amusements of almost all kinds are prohibited, and time passes on with gloomy monotony, only broken by a stray saint's day, like a gleam of sunshine across a murky sky.

As the fast draws near its close, preparation is on tiptoe for a change. The egg-market begins to rise, owing to the demand for 'Easter eggs,' for on that day it is customary to present an egg to every acquaintance on first greeting him. This has given rise to a very pretty custom of giving presents of artificial eggs

of every variety of material, and frequently with the most elegant decorations. The imperial glass manufactory furnishes an immense number of eggs of glass, with cut flowers and figures, designed as presents from the Czar and Czarina.

Saturday night before Easter at last comes and goes. As the midnight hour which is to usher in Easter-day approaches, the churches begin to fill. The court appears in the Imperial chapel in full dress; and the people, of all ages, ranks, and conditions, throng their respective places of worship. Not a priest, however, is to be seen, until the midnight hour strikes, when the entrance to the sanctuary of the church is flung open, and the song peals forth—*Christohs vosskress! Christohs vosskress ihs mortvui*—“Christ is risen! Christ is risen from the dead!” The priests in their richest robes press through the throng, bowing and swinging their censers before the shrine of the saints, repeating the ‘Christ is risen!’ The congregation grasp each other’s hands, those acquainted, however distantly, embracing and kissing, repeating the same words. The churches are at once in a blaze of illumination within and without; and all over the city cannons boom, rockets hiss, and bells peal in token of joy. The Great Fast is over, and the Easter festival has begun.

In the churches the ceremony of blessing the food is going on. The whole pavement, unencumbered with pews or seats, is covered with dishes ranged in long rows, with passages between for the officiating

priests, who pace along, sprinkling holy water to the right and left, and pronouncing the form of benediction; the owner of each dish all the while on a keen look-out that his food does not fail of receiving some drops of the sanctifying fluid. Before daylight all this is accomplished; and then come visitings and banquets, congratulations of the season, bowings, hand-shakings, and, above all, kissing.

All Russia breaks out now into an Oriental exuberance of kisses. Every member of a family salutes every other member with a kiss. All acquaintances, however slight, greet with a kiss and a *Christohs vosskress*. Long-robed *mujiks* mingle beards and kisses, or brush their hirsute honours over the faces of their female acquaintances. In the public offices all the *employées* salute each other and their superiors. So in the army. The general embraces and kisses all the officers of the corps; the colonel of a regiment those beneath him, besides a deputation of the soldiers; and the captain salutes all the men of his company. The Czar does duty at Easter. He must of course salute his family and retinue, his court and attendants. But this is not all. On parade he goes through the ceremony with his officers, and a selected body of privates, who stand as representatives of the rest, and even with the sentinels at the palace gates. So amid smiles and hand-shakings, and exclamations of "Christ has arisen!" pass on the days of the Easter festival. Ample amends are made for the long abstinence of

the Great Fast, by unbounded indulgence in the coveted animal food, to say nothing of the copious libations of brandy, evidences of which are visible enough in groups of amateur street-sweepers who subsequently are seen plying their brooms in the early morning hours. Such is St. Petersburg, when most Russian."

Some of the views and opinions expressed here are amply borne out by the evidence of numerous eye-witnesses; while all travellers appear to concur in the same opinion as to the superficial character discoverable underneath the seeming magnificence and imposing massiveness of the buildings of St. Petersburg. The Russian autocrat seems indeed to have an obstacle to contend with, more insurmountable than all the difficulties which beset the old despots of the Nile, even when contending with the vast African deserts of sand which hem in on either side the great valley of the Nile. This obstacle is to be found in the venality and utter want of honest pride or high principle in any rank of the Emperor's agents. The following notice of St. Petersburg and its inhabitants, by the author of "Revelations of Russia," himself an eye-witness, embraces confirmatory opinions from other well-known travellers:—

"St. Petersburg, the offspring of the first Peter, is the type of that modern Russia, with the existence of which it is coeval; modern Russia, corrupt, polished, and uncivilized, its oriental barbarism glossed over by the varnish of European usages.


It is not yet a hundred and forty years since the first buildings of this imperial city replaced the fishermen's huts on the banks and marshy islets of the Neva, and it is little more than that period since the ground on which it stands was Swedish territory.

No city in Europe is more striking to the beholder than St. Petersburg—few, perhaps, are less imposing. The magnificence of its squares, its buildings, and canals, and the advantageous manner in which its most imposing monuments are grouped together, produce an effect no European city can rival. But then the incongruous medley of the Greek and mixed southern architecture of its remarkable buildings, with the domes and minarets of Muscovite Byzantine churches, gold, blue, green, silver, and star-bespangled, and the modern and parvenu look of the stuccoed fronts of its gigantic edifices, the very whiteness of the plaster, in an atmosphere as clear and void of smoke as that of Italy, irresistibly remind us that it is a thing of yesterday.

There are none of those historical associations connected with the spot which invest with interest the old moss-grown buildings of the middle ages, and cause us to look with some reverence on the mean old narrow streets and churches of more ancient cities. Neither has architecture or sculpture any of those treasures to offer to our view which in older countries reward our patient research. Vast triumphal gates and arches rise before the beholder, the arms and trophies obviously of stucco, painted bronze; and the

gigantic steeds and statues of that metal which surmount them are lamentable in execution. Everywhere the idea seems to have prevailed of raising edifices Egyptian-like and Babylonian, such as the genius of Martin conceived to have stood on the place of now clay-covered ruins. But the idea has only been carried out as far as magnitude is concerned ; for instead of bearing the impress of time-defying solidity, which we know to have outlasted the very memory of empires passed away, so characteristic of Egyptian monuments, or the architectural magnificence which modern imagination has transferred to canvass, St. Petersburg, with its gigantic piles, has nothing in its favour but their magnitude ; we gaze on them with no more awe than on the miniature Gothic castle of the Cockney ; and if in St. Petersburg everything reminds us that it has sprung up like a rapidly developed marsh-plant from the morass on which its pile-sustained foundations rest, so we labour under the painful and irresistible impression that it will be as ephemeral.

This impression it produced, not only on the eloquent and imaginative Marquis de Custine, but on the minute and homely Kohl, and the less matter-of-fact Bremner. 'The Russian capital,' says the latter, 'has filled the nations with wonder by its sudden rise ; is it to fill them with greater wonder by its yet more sudden fall ? Shall the proud monarch of the north hear it said of his darling seat, as it was said to the repining prophet, of the gourd which had made him



so exceedingly glad—‘It came up in a night, and perished in a night!’ ‘The ancients,’ the marquis observes, ‘built with indestructible materials, beneath a conservative sky; here, where the climate destroys everything, are raised up palaces of wood, houses of planks, and temples of stucco. It is true the Russian workmen spend their lives in remaking, during summer, what the winter has undone. Nothing resists the influence of this climate; those edifices which appear the most ancient were reconstructed yesterday. Stone lasts here no longer than the lime and mortar in other climes. These polar solitudes are peopled with statues and basso-relievos to perpetuate historical events, without remembering that in this country monuments endure even less than the recollections of the past. This city, with quays of granite, is a marvel, but the palace of ice, in which the Empress Elizabeth held a banquet, was no less a wonder, and lasted as long as the snow-flakes, those roses of Siberia.’


‘The idea,’ says Kohl, ‘that this beautiful youthful city, with all its magnificent creations, is doomed to destruction, is really awful. At any rate, we need not be surprised, if told by the newspapers some morning, that Petersburg, which suddenly rose like a splen meteor from the marshes of Finland, has disappeared as suddenly, like the *ignis fatuus* which haunts such situations.’

Now, if the judgment of travellers ought seldom singly to be relied on—some wanting the power, others

opportunities of discerning—some from an alpine height, when a vale of Chamouni opens before them, looking only to the mule-tracks and inequalities of their road—others, whose eye embraces the wide expanse, mistaking, in their enthusiasm, clouds for mountains; if our own impressions, coloured by our momentary tone of mind, or influenced by vaguely remembered facts, is to be mistrusted, yet when we find them agreeing with those of men so different in ideas, language, and temper, and these men so well agreed among themselves, we may venture to deduce that this appearance of perishability is one of the marked and characteristic expressions of the features of this gigantic city.

It is said that the soil of St. Petersburg is in many parts fathomless bog, and that the piles rather *float* than directly sustain the buildings above them; and it is well known that a prevalence of west winds, such as, if rare, will probably occur once in a century or two, would suffice to raise the waters of the Gulf of Finland high enough to sweep away the devoted city. It will be remembered how nearly this happened in the reign of Alexander."

The oldest monuments of architectural skill which have survived the wasting influence of time are the vast structures still remaining on the banks of the Nile. These, we have every reason to believe, were produced under the influence of a despotism no less absolute than that of the Russian Czars; but all the natural influences on which the permanency of archi-



tectural art so mainly depends were as favourable to the old Egyptian as they appear to be inimical to modern Slavonic art. The dry soil and pure atmosphere of Egypt preserve even the pigments laid on their most exposed façades, more fresh after the lapse of upwards of twenty centuries, than similar decorations in the humid latitudes of northern Europe, after an interval of only a very few years. The manner in which the northern capital of St. Petersburg has risen up, amid the wide waste, where only a few poor fishermen's huts were formerly to be seen, at the will of a single absolute ruler, naturally suggests the comparison of the Russian capital with some of the gigantic works begot in like manner, in obedience to the despotic will of the old Pharaohs of Egypt. Such comparisons, however, tell in all respects most strongly against the modern builders. St. Petersburg has, indeed, been not inaptly styled a vast encampment of lath and plaster. "Nothing can be more true," says the author of "Revelations of Russia," "than that man can here never rest from his labour; when he has raised up a crowd of colossal edifices, he has not only built nothing for future ages, but has hardly done anything for his immediate posterity. Such continuous reparations are necessary, that each generation may almost be calculated to have built the whole city, by instalments of annual repairs. To this the material, no less than the climate and situation, contributes. That chiefly used in St. Petersburg for external embellishment, is in no climate very durable;

but the thick, massive walls of brick or stone, elsewhere comparatively time-defying, are here mere hollow shells, which the fraud of architects, courtiers, and ministers, has filled with sand and rubbish, although the price of every brick and stone thus replaced has been wrung from the blood and sweat of the Russian people.

Nothing can be more obvious than that, in a very few years—in half the time that has elapsed since St. Petersburg arose from the marsh—if this city were not *being perpetually built*, the marsh would again succeed the city; the stucco would be dust; the walls it covers, ruins imbedded in the mud; and the cold spungy moss of this northern climate again creeping over it, with the acid cranberry that alone seems to flourish in its alternate bed of snow and stagnant waters. Only the St. Isaac's Cathedral, the Alexander column, and the granite quays of the Neva's bank, it is said, would, a century hence, survive the ruins of St. Petersburg, were it not for the intervention of man's preserving hand."

The term "encampment," applied above to St. Petersburg, is peculiarly appropriate, when all the circumstances which characterize the Russian capital are considered. Peter the Great not only fixed its site within a foreign district, just snatched from the domains of the Swedish Crown, but it remains even to this day like a colony planted among a strange people. The whole country which surrounds it is still principally peopled by Finns; the opposite bank

of the Neva is Finnish ground; and while the aboriginal natives of the Grand Duchy of Fialand are said secretly to indulge in Swedish sympathies, there is no room to question the fact that the native Russian still looks upon St. Petersburg with the feelings of a stranger, and regards the ancient Moscow as the true capital of the empire.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIVER NEVA.

GRANDEUR and meanness are the conflicting elements which strike the traveller, as he explores the architectural wonders of the Russian capital. Before, however, we attempt to follow him, we must devote some little space to a description of the river, to which was mainly owing the choice of the site by the great founder of St. Petersburg, whose colossal equestrian statue still forms one of the most remarkable monuments on the banks of the Neva. Though by no means faultless, this monument cannot fail to strike every beholder with a sense of its imposing grandeur; nor has it been surpassed, or indeed equalled, by any more recent equestrian statue erected in any of the capitals of Europe. Its pedestal, a huge mass of granite, fifteen hundred tons' weight, was transported on trucks from a marsh distant four miles from the city,

and is placed at one end of the Isaac Bridge, where it occupies the central point of a wide open area. Upon this bold natural pedestal the fine equestrian statue of the great founder of St. Petersburg is placed, and forms one of the most conspicuous objects in the Russian capital. The Czar is reining back his horse, which is trampling under foot a serpent, emblematic of envy, while he extends his right hand towards the river, as if calling into being the commerce of the Neva, and the magnificent edifices which line its banks..

In attempting to convey to the reader some idea of the grandeur of the northern capital which the first Emperor of Russia called into existence, amid the marshes of the Gulf of Finland, the finest, if not indeed the only grand natural feature of the site, must be acknowledged to be the River Neva. It enters the sea by many branches, along all of which portions of St. Petersburg are built; but the principal one, on which the finest parts of the city stand, is called the Grand Neva. At its chief point is the Vasili Ostroff, or Basil's Island, more frequently styled, from its size and importance, *the Island*. From this the Isaac Bridge is carried to the mainland, and at its opposite end is the Isaac Square, the central point of the capital, adorned not only with Peter's statue, but also containing the Admiralty, the Senate House, and St. Isaac's Cathedral.

The bridge itself is a curious structure, singularly contrasting with the substantial granite quays which

line the river on either hand. It is built entirely on boats; and though upwards of a thousand feet in length, and forming a roadway sixty feet broad, it is entirely composed of unpainted wood, without gravel, or paving of any kind, to protect the massive square logs from being injured by the action of the carriages or waggon which crowd it throughout the summer. Twenty large boats or pontons are firmly anchored in the river, where they are with difficulty kept stationary in the stream, the strongest moorings proving no more than sufficient to resist the violence of the current. From these pontons huge beams start upward sufficiently high to support a roadway elevated to the ordinary height of more substantial bridges. Beneath this the waters of the Neva rush ceaselessly on, communicating, in the calmest state of the river, a loose rocking motion, perceptible in passing from one division to another. The strength of the bridge, however, amply suffices for all the purposes of traffic, and is fully able to bear any load of waggon that can find room on it at one time. It is completed in compartments, each of which can be floated away on its own ponton, by merely detaching the fastenings to the adjacent one, and loosing the moorings. A certain number of these are removed every morning at two o'clock, and the passage thereby left free for vessels proceeding to the custom-house, or moving up the river. But a stronger power even than the swift current of the Neva must either be resisted or given place to on its bosom. The brief

summer of Northern Russia rapidly passes away, and no sooner has the frost of its early winter fairly set in, than the whole bridge has to be taken to pieces, and its pontoons floated away into harbour, where they are laid up till the river is again free from ice. All communication is then at an end between the opposite sides of the river till the ice has fairly formed and bridged over the whole surface of the river with its solid pavement. The whole river then becomes a fair, and both business and pleasure are pursued on its bosom far more than on the land. Games and festivities of every kind enliven it throughout the long winter; but this also, though protracted to a degree scarcely conceivable by us, in a seat of commerce and civilization, at length comes to an end, and the Vasili Ostroff is once more cut off from intercourse with the mainland, until the floating ice has cleared away sufficiently to admit of the pontoons of St. Isaac's Bridge again floating in safety on the waters of the Grand Neva.

This fine river is the outlet of the Ladoga Lake, a natural reservoir, forming the largest fresh water lake in Europe. Within its large area the water deposits all its impurities, so that when it reaches St. Petersburg it is pure as crystal, and has been compared by a German traveller to the Rhine, when it first issues from the icy glaciers of the Alps. On the bosom of this noble river are borne alike from the interior, and from foreign climes, nearly all the necessities and the luxuries of life to the citizens of the

great capital reared along its banks, and on the little archipelago of islands formed at its mouth. It yields, also, abundance of fine fish, and its pure waters afford an unfailing supply for all the requirements of the city, which is otherwise without a single spring of pure water within a distance of many leagues.

The principal branch of the river, called the Grand Neva, is as broad as the Thames at London, but instead of the dingy wharfs and mean alleys lining the muddy banks of the Thames, the sides of the Neva are bordered by broad, open, granite quays, with flights of steps at intervals to descend to the water; while along these fine open quays many of the principal public buildings are ranged, some of which we shall attempt to describe. On the river itself, during the open season, two or three large newly built men-of-war are retained afloat after being launched, until they are ready to be sent down to Cronstadt to complete their rigging and receive their stores. Numerous ponton bridges connect the banks of the river at various points, constructed for the most part on the same principle as the great Isaac Bridge, though this obviously tends greatly to obstruct the general use of the river as a highway and principal artery of the capital, such as the Thames with its thousands of steam-boats, lighters, barges, and wherries, is to London. The Neva, however, is by no means wanting in such traffic, though the ponton bridges tend to circumscribe the limits of operation in the use of such river transports. Numerous lighters and small

vessels are constantly plying up and down, and handsome gondola-shaped passage boats cross from side to side, giving a lively and animated character to the river scene.

In winter, though all is changed, and every vessel disappears from the open river, a no less animated spectacle gives new life to the river. A large space is set apart exclusively for the skaters, but they are to be met on every part of the river, like the pedestrians on the broad *trottoirs* in summer. The sledges now take the place of the lighters and gondolas, and pass to and fro with great velocity, exhibiting every variety of style and costume.

It will not be wondered that the River Neva is a source of pride and pleasure, as well as of anxiety and fear, to the people who have built the great capital near its embouchure. We may imagine what the condition of London would be, if twice a-year the whole bridges from Chelsea to the pool were shut up for an indefinite period, and the Thames itself rendered impassable for barge or wherry. Yet this takes place every autumn and spring while the ice is forming, and again when the thaw sets in, towards the close of March, and the huge accumulations of floating ice sweep down from Lake Ladoga into the Gulf of Finland. We have already referred to the imminent danger to which the Russian capital has been more than once exposed under the combined influence of floods, and a gale in the Gulf. With all these various causes of interest and anxiety in

operation, it is not difficult to conceive of the mingled feelings of admiration and awe with which the citizens of St. Petersburg view their proudly rolling river. We have already referred to the ceremonial by which the re-opening of the Neva, so long locked in the iron grasp of winter, is greeted; but its observation by a recent traveller is not unworthy of being repeated here, where the river is the special subject under consideration :—

“The waters of the Neva,” says Kohl, “is as daily a topic with those that dwell on its banks as the waters of the Nile is to the Egyptians; and this is the less surprising, as the Neva is a source not only of delight and enjoyment to the people of St. Petersburg, but also one of constant anxiety, and sometimes of terror.

The northern winter imprisons the lovely nymph of the Neva in icy bands for six months in the year. It is seldom till after the beginning of April that the water acquires sufficient warmth to burst her prison. The moment is always anxiously expected; and no sooner have the dirty masses of ice advanced sufficiently to display as much of the bright mirror of the river as may suffice to bear a boat from one side to the other, than the glad tidings are announced to the inhabitants by the artillery of the fortress. At that moment, be it day or night, the commandant of the fortress, arrayed in all the insignia of his rank, and accompanied by the officers of his suite, embarks in an elegant gondola, and repairs to the Emperor’s

palace, which lies immediately opposite. He fills a large crystal goblet with the water of the Neva, and presents it to the emperor as the first and most precious tribute of returning spring. He informs his master that the force of winter has been broken, that the waters are free, that an active navigation may now again be looked for, and points to his own gondola as the first swan that has swam on the river that year. He then presents the goblet to the Emperor, who drinks it off to the health of the dear citizens of his capital. There is not probably on the face of the globe another glass of water that brings a better price; for it is customary for the Emperor to fill the goblet with ducats before he returns it to the commandant. Such at least *was* the custom; but the goblet was found to have a sad tendency to enlarge its dimensions; so that the Emperor began to perceive that he had every year a larger dose of water to drink, and a greater number of ducats to pay for it. At last he thought it high time to compromise matters with his commandant, who now receives on each occasion a fixed sum of 200 ducats. Even this, it must be admitted, is a truly imperial fee for a draught of water; but the compromise is said to have effectually arrested the alarming growth of the goblet.

As the close of winter approaches, the ice of the Neva assumes a very remarkable appearance, resolving itself into a number of thin bars of ice, of about an inch in diameter, and equal in length to the thickness of the crust that covers the river. These bars

have at last so little adhesion, that it becomes dangerous to venture on the ice, except where it is covered by a solid mass of snow. The foot, pushing down some of these bars, will sink at times through ice several ells thick; and the large masses of ice, apparently quite solid, that lie on the dry ground, break into a multitude of glassy bars when gently touched with a stick. Several weeks, therefore, before the ice breaks up, all driving or walking upon it is prohibited. Here and there some open spaces begin to show themselves, and a quantity of dirty snow-water collects upon the surface. The icy crust that, a few weeks previously, had looked so gay and animated with its sledges and promenaders, becomes now quite oppressive to look upon, and every one longs to see the dirty, useless, worn-out servitor take his departure. There has often been fine warm weather for several weeks before the Neva shows the least sign of recovering her liberty; for which, in the end, she is usually more indebted to rain and wind than to the rays of the sun. One good shower at this season has more effect upon the ice than three days of sunshine; and it is rarely till after there have been several rainy and windy days in succession, that the ice is got into motion. The surest symptom of an approaching break-up is the disappearance of the water from the surface. As long as there is water on the ice, nobody hesitates to venture on it, even when the horses have to wade breast high; but as soon as the water disappears, the fact is taken as a warning that the ice

has separated from the banks, and has become too porous to retain water on its surface.

It is generally between the 6th and the 14th of April (old style), or between the 18th and the 26th, according to the calendar in use in most parts of Europe, that the Neva throws off her icy covering. The 6th is the most general day. On that day the interesting fact is said to occur, on an average, ten times in a century, so that ten to one against the 6th is always thought a fair wager. The 30th of April (12th of May, N. S.) is considered the latest day, and the 6th of March (18th, N. S.) is considered the earliest day on which the ice ever breaks up. On each of these days the occurrence is supposed to take place once in a hundred years. It is generally about the middle of November, and more frequently on the 20th (2d of December, N. S.) than on any other day, that the ice is brought to a stand-still. In 1826 the river was not frozen up before the 14th of December, and in 1805 as early as the 16th of October.

The breaking up of the ice is an anxious moment to every one. A multitude of wagers are always depending upon it, and every one is more or less interested. The carpenters and work-people long to earn an honest penny or two by the reconstruction of the bridges; the ladies wish the Neva and the Gulf of Finland clear, that the steamer from Lübeck may arrive with the latest *nouveautés* from Paris; the merchants are often in the most painful suspense, lest a protracted winter, by delaying the arrival of their

vessels, should mar the finest speculations ; booksellers and students are longing for a supply of the new books that have been ushered into life in England, France, and Germany, during the preceding six months. The sick native, and the home-sick stranger, are alike anxious for the day that may re-establish the communication with more genial climes, and almost the only subject of speculation at this season is the day when the river will be free again. On Easter Sunday and Easter Monday a great number of bets are sure to be laid. One man, in 1836, had betted against every day, from the 1st to the 17th of April, and won nearly all his wagers.

The departure of the ice always forms an exciting spectacle, and crowds are sure to be attracted to the quays by the first gun fired from the citadel. The golden gondola of the commandant is not long alone in its glory, for hundreds of boats are quickly in motion, to re-establish the communication between the different quarters of the city.


The first blow is more than half the battle on these occasions, but it is not all the battle. It is only that part of the ice which lies in the immediate vicinity of St. Petersburg that moves away on the first day. The ice from the upper part of the river frequently comes down afterwards in huge masses, and more than once forces the inhabitants of the one side to postpone their visits to their friends on the other side. For several weeks after the first break-up, the ice continues occasionally to come down in great force

from the Ladoga Lake. As this lake has a surface of two thousand square miles, if all the ice had to go down the Neva, which is only a verst in breadth, and not very rapid in its current, it would take more than two months of incessant *eisgang*. It follows, therefore, that the greater part of the ice must melt within the lake itself; still quite enough remains for the annoyance of the St. Petersburgers, who are often inconvenienced by the accumulation that takes place at the mouth of the river. The boatmen of St. Petersburg, however, are tolerably familiar with ice, and the navigation on the river is seldom interrupted by these later arrivals from the lake.

All the other harbours of the Baltic are usually free from ice before that of St. Petersburg, and a number of vessels are almost always awaiting, in the Sound, the news that the navigation of the Russian capital has been resumed. The first spring ship that arrives in the Neva is the occasion of great rejoicing, and seldom fails to bring its cargo to an excellent market. It is mostly laden with oranges, millinery, and such articles of taste and vanity as are likely to be most attractive to the frivolous and wealthy, who seldom fail to reward the first comer by purchasing his wares at enormous prices. The first ship is soon followed by multitudes, and the most active life succeeds to a stillness like that of death. All the flags of Europe come floating in from the sea, and fragile rafts and rudely-built barges descend the river with the products of the interior. The contents of the


warehouses find their way on ship-board. The ships of war take their departure for their peaceful evolutions in the Baltic. The smoking steamers are seen snorting and splashing up and down the river, where a few weeks before a seal could not have found room to air himself. Every day, every hour, brings something new, till the disenchantment of the icy palace is complete.

An immense quantity of ice is consumed in Russian house-keeping. Throughout the summer, ices are sold in the streets of every Russian town; and not only iced water, iced wine, and iced beer, but even iced tea, is drunk in immense quantities. The short but excessively hot summer would spoil most of the food brought to market, had not the winter provided in abundance the means for guarding against such rapid decomposition. An ice-house is therefore looked on as an indispensable appendage, not merely to the establishments of the wealthy, but even to the huts of the peasants. In St. Petersburg alone there are said to be ten thousand ice-houses, and it may easily be supposed that to fill all these cellars is a task of no trifling magnitude. It is not too much to calculate that each ice-house, on an average, requires fifty sledge loads of ice to fill it. The fishmongers, butchers, and dealers in quass, have such enormous cellars, that many hundreds of loads will go into them, and the breweries, distilleries, &c., consume incalculable quantities. According to the above calculation, five hundred thousand sledge loads of ice



would have to be drawn out of the Neva every year; but this calculation is under rather than over the mark. It is certainly the merchandise in which the most extensive traffic is carried on during winter. Whole processions of sledges laden with the glittering crystals may then be seen ascending from the Neva, and thousands of men are incessantly at work raising the cooling produce from its parent river.

The breaking of the ice is carried on in this way:—The workmen begin by clearing the snow away from the surface, that they may clearly trace out the form of the blocks to be detached. They then measure off a large parallelogram, and mark the outline with a hatchet. This parallelogram is subdivided into a number of squares of a size to suit the capacity of their sledges. When the drawing is complete, the more serious part of the work begins. A regular trench has to be formed round the parallelogram in question. This is done with hatchets, and as the ice is frequently four or five feet thick, the trenches become at last so deep that the workmen are as completely lost to the eye as if they had been labouring in a mine. Of course, a sufficient thickness of ice must be left in the trenches to bear the workmen, which is afterwards broken with bars of iron. When the parallelogram has thus been loosened, the subdivision is effected with comparative ease. A number of men mount the swimming mass, and with their pointed iron ice-breakers, they all strike at the same moment upon the line that has been marked out. A



few volleys of this kind make the ice break just along the wished-for line, and each of the oblong slips thus obtained is broken up again into square pieces after a similar fashion. To draw the fragments out of the water, a kind of inclined railroad has to be made on the side of the standing ice. This done, iron hooks are fastened into the pieces that are to be landed, and, amid loud cheers, the clear, green, crystalline mass is drawn up by willing hands. As the huge lumps lie on the snow, they appear of an emerald green, and are remarkably compact, without either bubble or rent. As soon as the sledge is loaded, the driver seats himself upon his merchandise, and thus, coolly enthroned, glides away to the cellars of his customers, enlivening his frosty occupation with a merry song. It is by no means without interest to visit the ice-shafts of the Neva, and watch the Russian labourers while engaged in a task so congenial to the habits of their country.

In the cellars, the ice is piled up with much art and regularity, and all sorts of shelves and niches are made for the convenience of placing milk, meat, and similar articles there in hot weather. Such a description, at least, applies to what may be called a tidy, orderly ice-house; but tidiness and order do not always preside over Russian arrangements, and in the majority of cellars, the ice is thrown carelessly in and broken into pieces, that it may be packed away into the corners, and that as little space as possible may be left unoccupied. The consistency and durability of

the ice do not appear to suffer from this breaking process; on the contrary, the whole, if well packed, soon freezes into one compact mass, that is afterwards proof against the warmest summer. The Russians are so accustomed to these ice-houses, that they are at a loss to understand how a family can do without them; and their housewives are in the greatest trouble when they think they have not laid in a sufficient supply of ice during the winter, or when in summer they fancy their stock likely to run short. It may safely be estimated that the ice consumed in St. Petersburg during the summer costs the inhabitants from two to three millions of rubles."


It is scarcely possible to avoid the conclusion, after carefully exploring St. Petersburg, and watching it through the entire round of the changing seasons, that such a site would never have been chosen but by the dictation of a despotic ruler accustomed to see all difficulties and obstacles yield to his iron will. By fixing the site of his new capital only ten miles farther up the river, the Czar might have secured a position sufficiently elevated to place his capital entirely beyond the reach of the river floods, while he would still have had the river navigable for the largest vessels, and enjoyed all the advantages requisite for a capital which are compatible with such a high northern latitude; just as London is at this present day as flourishing a sea-port as if its site had been fixed in the marshy fens of Essex, where the sea has to be shut out by embankments, and buildings must

be reared on piles. The insurmountable disadvantages incident to the site at the mouth of the Neva were early perceived by its builders, and had it been the work of private speculators, like the new towns which spring up along the banks of the freshly explored rivers of America, it would have been speedily abandoned for a safer site; but St. Petersburg was the scheme of one whose iron will was only strengthened by opposition, and his imperial successors have continued the same war with the elements with wonderful success.

From what has been already stated of the changes which are produced on the river by the annual frosts and thaws, it will readily be perceived how great an obstacle the want of permanent bridges must place in the way of trade and general intercourse, in a capital built on a group of islands. Substantial stone bridges have been built over the Fontanka, Moika, and Ligofka canals, amounting to about thirty in number, and most of them the work of the Empress Catherine: but even these are found narrow, and inadequate to the increasing traffic of the city; and policemen are stationed at each of them, who not only maintain order, but urge the carriages and waggons across the bridge at their utmost speed. This duty they manage in thorough Russian fashion, assailing both horses and drivers with their staffs if they fail to proceed at a rapid trot. About thirty more bridges, including several suspension bridges, have been more recently constructed; but such is the size of this growing capital, and so many are the

islands, and intersecting streams and canals, that great inconvenience is felt from the limited means of communication. But the mere delay at crossing one of the permanent bridges, or even the necessity of taking a circuitous rout, is trifling when compared with the obstructions already described as the result of the use of ponton bridges. The Isaac's Bridge has already been described, and it is the only one which connects the two most important parts of the city, the Vasili Ostroff and what is called the great side. Nine in all of the principal bridges of St. Petersburg, which span the broadest and deepest waters of the Neva, consist merely of timber carriage-ways resting on pontons. Various causes combine to render it difficult, if not altogether impossible, to replace these with stone bridges, though many projects have been considered with a view to such permanent structures. The current of the Neva is exceedingly strong and rapid, and while the water is very deep, the soil is so marshy and insecure, that even after the enormous outlay requisite for laying a foundation sufficient to bear the solid pier of such a bridge, it seems doubtful whether the next winter might not see the whole swept away. The briefness of the season in which such work could be executed is another great, if not insurmountable impediment; for it seems certain that whatever work in the bed of the river was left incomplete, exposed to the violence of the changes which winter and spring effect on the Neva, must be destroyed. One of the spring pheno-

mena peculiar to this river is of a remarkable character. It sometimes happens that the whole ice in the Gulf of Cronstadt gets broken up by stormy weather, while that in the river remains firm for some time after. The immense pressure on the great field of ice in the Neva from Lake Ladoga down to its embouchure is then left to act without any counterpoise, and the whole mass in the river glides down in an unbroken body, like a rock moving on an inclined plain. This, it must be obvious, is a force such as we have not the slightest conception of from any phenomena witnessed on the rivers of our milder latitudes, and can only be compared to some of those tremendous operations of nature witnessed in the remote arctic regions around the pole. It has been seen in the description of the operations of the ice-gatherers on the Neva that the ice is frequently from four to five feet thick. The vast waters of Lake Ladoga, into which sixty rivers run, sends all its surplus waters, and a large portion of the ice formed on its surface, down the Neva. It is easy, therefore, to perceive that piers which amply suffice for bearing the noble granite arches of London Bridge, might be swept away by the ice of the first winter on the Neva. The slow, continuous pressure of the solid mass of ice extending from Lake Ladoga to the Vasili Ostroff, can be compared to nothing so much as one of those rock-avalanches which occasionally occur in the Alps, where a whole mountain mass gives way, and slides into the valley below. Under such enormous pres-



sure, it seems that piers founded in the slimy marsh must inevitably yield, until they at length glided from below the superincumbent arches, and left them to drop into the river.

The mere cost of public works has never been the cause which has prevented their being proceeded with in Russia; and the apprehension of the great outlay required for bridging the Neva, is least likely to interfere with the attempt, if once a feasible plan has been devised; for the annual cost of maintaining the inadequate and temporary substitutes at present in use, could hardly fail to exceed in the end any single outlay demanded for such a purpose. Now that the bold scheme of Telford, in his noble Menai Suspension Bridge, has been followed by the still bolder undertaking of Stephenson in spanning the same strait with the great Britannia Tubular Bridge, it is obvious that to the skill and enterprise of British engineers the feat of spanning the Neva, in defiance of its torrents and its vast fields of ice, offers no insurmountable obstacles. Hitherto, however, no Russian engineer appears to have been found equal to the task, though scarcely a year elapses in which some new plan is not proposed, discussed, adjourned, and forgotten. "The nine ponton bridges of St. Petersburg," says the intelligent German traveller, Kohl, "are so constructed that they may easily be taken to pieces, and quickly be put together again. During summer they remain undisturbed, each ponton moored to its anchor, and fastened to huge piles;

but when the ice begins to come down the river in autumn, the bridges are taken asunder. Each bridge has its commandant, with a hundred or two of workmen under his command. When the bridge has thus been removed, the intercourse between the different portions of the city can be carried on only by means of boats. As soon as the ice stands, the bridges are reconstructed, for the ice on the Neva always forms a very rough surface, for which reason most people prefer using the bridges when they wish to cross the river ; though a number of paths, crossing each other in all directions, are also soon formed in the vast snowy desert.

In spring, the bridges continue to be used till the artillery of the fortress announces the breaking up of the ice, when they rapidly disappear, under the dexterous management of the commandants and their experienced assistants. Preparations have usually been made some days before, by clearing a space in the river, to allow the pontons to glide safely down into their several havens of refuge. As soon as the ice has passed, the bridges are restored; but every succeeding arrival of ice makes another demolition necessary. Such is the eagerness of the inhabitants of the different quarters to be able to avail themselves of the accommodation of their bridges, that they take advantage even of the shortest interval of open water. Each time that the Isaac's Bridge is put together, an expense of several hundred rubles is incurred; nevertheless, I have seen it taken to

pieces and put together again two or three times on one day; and in the course of one spring it is said to have been broken up and reconstructed no less than twenty-three times.

It may easily be supposed that St. Petersburg has to pay dearly enough for these wretched wooden bridges. The constant demolition and reconstruction soon wear the wood out, and the boards at the top are quickly worn to dust by the carriages incessantly passing across. It is not at all impossible that the Isaac's Bridge, during the short period of its existence, has cost more than the massive bridge of Dresden during the three hundred years that have elapsed since it was built."

The noble bridge over the Elbe here referred to is regarded as the finest structure of the kind in Germany. It has sixteen arches, is thirty-six feet in width, and one thousand four hundred and twenty feet long—that is, two hundred feet longer than Waterloo Bridge, London. It was partially destroyed in 1813, on the retreat of the French under Marshal Davoust, and is now decorated with an inscribed bronze crucifix, commemorative of its restoration by the Emperor Alexander. It is no slight comment on the costly and unsatisfactory character of the temporary modern ponton bridges of St. Petersburg, that the modern Isaac's Bridge should already have cost more in its brief existence than the substantial stone structure which spans the Elbe at Dresden, even though war has so violently anticipated the

effects of time. Such is the River Neva, with the structures specially pertaining to it. Its banks are lined for miles with solid granite embankments, sustaining the broad quays which range on either side; and to some of the principal buildings raised along these thoroughfares, or placed within the ample squares of the Imperial City, we shall now direct our attention.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCHES OF ST. PETERSBURG

IN the ecclesiastical architecture of St. Petersburg, a curious mixture of Byzantine and Moorish architecture is apparent, bearing in this respect no unsuitable analogy to its own curious ecclesiastical system. The great architectural work is the Cathedral of St. Isaac, the protector of the empire. It is now nearly finished, after the expenditure of enormous sums of money, much of which was wasted, in consequence of changing plans or imperfect execution. It was founded by Peter the Great; but his plans were rejected by Catherine; and it was begun anew on a grander scale, with marble for its material. In every successive reign something has been done towards the furtherance of this design; but the foundations were at first insecure, and the constant renewal of these, added to the changing plans of new


architects, overseers, and masters of the works, have so crippled later operations, that the revenues of each succeeding Emperor have been more encroached upon for the repair of his predecessor's blunders, than for the actual extension of the work. At length the present Emperor took cognisance of the unprofitableness of such an unprogressive system, and wisely resolved to begin nearly *de novo*. The old work was accordingly swept away, and the present magnificent pile was commenced on a system of substantial durability, which strikingly contrasts with much of the most costly and showy work of the city. It has four fronts, so that no economy interferes with the architect's display of all the resources of his art and his genius. The walls are of beautiful white marble, and the peristyle, which forms the main feature in each front, consists of twelve noble columns of polished red granite, each of one solid block, sixty feet in height, and seven in diameter. These masses form the shafts of the column, added to which are capitals and bases of bronze; and as the order adopted is the Corinthian, the beauty of the whole may be conceived. The dark red columns, with their still darker capitals of bronze, are thrown out boldly against the walls of pure white marble behind, and adds greatly to the effect of the architectural design by their striking contrast.

The Emperor Nicholas grappled with the difficulty which had baffled all his predecessors, in a way that only a Russian autocrat of the nineteenth century

could do. He decided that the whole must be completed in ten years, and took the most effectual mode of accomplishing this, by decreeing the annual expenditure of a sum apparently adequate for the erection of a cathedral on the most magnificent scale that the ambition of his architect might devise. The requisite machinery was soon set agoing. Long sheds were constructed in the great square which faces the Neva. The gigantic masses of granite were hewn out of the quarry, and transported thither; and being completed in their cylindrical form and due proportions, hundreds of workmen were to be seen daily employed in polishing the pillars, and lightening their labours with a song. Five thousand labourers were engaged at one time on the cathedral. Even the operation of transporting the huge stones from the river across the square was an object of general interest, and afforded abundant proof of their gigantic size. The beams on which they were rolled were speedily reduced to mere threads by the great weight. The lifting them up when finished, and swinging them into their places, was a still more laborious task; but this also was accomplished without difficulty, by means of a gigantic frame-work, with wheels and pulleys, so wisely constructed to avoid all risk of danger from its giving way, that it was pronounced to have been ten times too strong for the purpose. As each of the pillars was raised to its site, a coin of the reigning Emperor was placed in the centre of the bronze base on which it was to rest;

and there these memorials of the imperial builder now rest, secure beyond the reach of injury or abstraction, until the time comes when other ages shall see the gorgeous pile deserted and fallen, and its crumbling columns shall reveal the numismatic evidences of the date and artistic style of coinage, when its noble porticos were reared. The same substantial appliances which have been employed in raising the shafts of the porticos of St. Isaac's Cathedral, have been expended on the still more important and more difficult task of obtaining a secure foundation. The abundance and the purity of the waters of the Neva, precludes all necessity for sinking wells in any part of St. Petersburg or its neighbourhood. Hence no excavations for such a purpose have helped here, as they usually do, to reveal the depth and character of the superficial soil. The site of St. Petersburg is one vast, unsubstantial, spongy marsh, and requires a foundation of piles to support even the slightest structure. The immense preparations, therefore, requisite for sustaining so massive and gigantic a fabric, and preventing a repetition of the failures of all the previous attempts, may readily be conceived. A whole forest of piles was driven into the swampy soil, until it became almost a solid mass of wood; and as this is excluded from the air, and placed in a situation favourable for its preservation for ages, it may be anticipated that Nicholas has found for his cathedral as firm a foundation as is possible on the marshy and unstable banks of the Neva.

The erection of such a structure in our own day is a work not unworthy of our attention, so different is it from anything on which the British zeal and devout energy of the nineteenth century is expended. In ages long gone by, there was no want of the mistaken devotion which found its expression in such costly and gorgeous piles of sculptured stone; and when they were built, it was not by the mere command of a despotic sovereign, who, in devoting the treasures of the nation to such a purpose, made no single sacrifice of his personal gratifications to accomplish the desired end. It is not uncommon for our age to be represented as altogether utilitarian and unspiritual; and those who say so point to our railways, Conway and Britannia tubular bridges, gigantic viaducts, and the like, as the objects which now occupy the energies and swallow up the contributions which more religious ages expended on cathedrals and temples dedicated to the divine worship. All this, however, is mere prejudiced and ignorant reasoning, for were the contributions which the enlightened piety of the nineteenth century expends on its benevolent and missionary schemes, devoted to the purposes of sacred architecture, our modern temples might rival ancient cathedrals as effectually as our railways and tubular bridges excel the engineering efforts of the ages referred to. Such as the Cathedral of St. Petersburg is, however, it is a work of no slight merit, and forms an enduring monument of the energy and perseverance of the Emperor Nicholas.



The intelligent German traveller, J. G. Kohl, who inspected the cathedral when far advanced towards completion, thus describes the impression produced on his mind: "The handsomest church in St. Petersburg is Isaac's Cathedral. The exterior is finished. It wants only the last decoration for the interior: the trophies and the pictures of saints. This church stands in the largest and most open place in the city, in the midst of its finest buildings and monuments: the Winter Palace, the Admiralty, the War-office, Alexander's Pillar, and the rock of Peter the Great; and will, when it has laid aside its mantle of scaffolding, show itself worthy of such neighbours. On the spot where it stands, they have been at work upon a place of worship for the last century. A wooden church was followed by a church of brick; a church of marble was then attempted, which failed, and was finished in brick. This half-and-half building vanished in its turn; and, under Nicholas I., the present magnificent building was erected, which will scarcely find so splendid a successor. It is entirely composed of granite blocks and polished marble. From the level of the upper part of Peter's-place rise three broad flights of steps, which might separately serve the fabulous giants of the Finnish mythology for seats. They are formed from masses of granite rock brought from Finland. These steps lead from the four sides of the building to the four chief entrances, each of which has a superb peristyle. The pillars of these peristyles are all magnificent

granite monoliths from Finland, buried for centuries in its swamps, till brought to light by the triumphant power of Russia, and rounded, polished, and erected as caryatides, to the honour of God, in his temple. The pillars, crowned with their capitals of bronze, support the enormous beam of a frieze formed of six fire-polished blocks. Over the peristyles, and at twice their height, rises the chief and central cupola, higher than it is wide, in the Byzantine proportion. It is supported also by thirty pillars of smooth polished granite, which, although gigantic in themselves, look small compared to those below. The cupola is covered with copper overlaid with gold, and glitters like the sun over a mountain. From its centre rises a small elegant rotundo, a miniature repetition of the whole, looking like a chapel on a mountain-top. The whole edifice is surrounded by the crowning and far-seen golden cross. Four smaller cupolas, resembling the greater in every particular, stand around, like children round a mother, and complete the harmony visible in every part. The walls of the church are to be covered with marble; and no doubt Isaac's Church will be the most remarkable building in St. Petersburg, and supersede the Kasan Church of the Virgin for great state festivals. This Kasan Church, which stands on the Perspective, is a monument of the so often failing spirit of imitation in Russia. The Russians wish to unite in their capital all that is grand or beautiful in the whole civilized world. This church is meant for a copy of St. Peter's at Rome, and, un-

bearable as a copy, is, moreover, not a good copy. The puny effort is almost comic in its contrast to the mighty work of Buonarotti. It is fortunate that it lies so far from its original: after the many lands he must pass through to reach it, the foreign spectator may have forgotten the impression of the southern prototype, and hence find the northern copy endurable. A portico of pillars, as in Rome, leads from either side in a semicircle to the two entrances of the church; but the pillars are small, and what in Rome seemed necessary and suitable to circumstances, is here a superfluous and incomprehensible appendage. The doors are of bronze, covered with a multitude of worthless bas-reliefs. In great niches along the sides of the church stand colossal statues of the Grand Dukes Vladimir and Alexander Nevsky, of St. John and St. Andrew. In the interior, which is little suited to the wants of religious service, as performed in Russia, they were obliged to place the high altar, not opposite the chief entrance, but very awkwardly at the side. All is dark and straitened; and one cannot help pitying the fifty-six monoliths, the mighty giants who support the little roof, and lamenting that their prodigious strength is not employed in a labour more worthy of them.

“Apart from these architectural discords, the church is not wanting in interest. First of all, the greedy eye is attracted by the silver of the ikonostases (the pictorial wall of the sanctuary). The balustrades, doors, and door-ways of the ikonostases are generally

of wood, carved and gilded, but in this church all its beams and posts are of massive silver. The pillars of the balustrade round the holy place, the posts of the three doors, the arches twenty feet in height above the altar, and the frames of the pictures, are all of silver. The silver beams are highly polished, and reflect with dazzling brilliancy the light of the thousand tapers that burn before them. I could not learn how many hundredweight of silver were employed; but, doubtless, many thousands of dozens of French and German spoons, and hundreds of soup-tureens and tea-pots, must have been melted down to furnish the material; for it was the Cossacks, laden with no inconsiderable booty from the campaigns of 1813 and 1814, who made an offering of this mass of silver to the Holy Mother of Kasan, for the object to which it is now appropriated! They seem to have a peculiar veneration for this Madonna, who is half their countrywoman; for John Vassielevitsh brought her from Kasan to Moscow, whence Peter the Great transported her to St. Petersburg. Her picture, set with pearls and precious stones, hangs in the church. It was before this picture that Kutusoff prayed before he advanced to meet the enemy in 1812, for which reason she is considered to be closely connected with that campaign."

It is an equally barbarous and mistaken idea to load architecture with such costly decorations of the precious metals, which ought rather to be expended in exchange for the noblest works of the

sculptor. This is especially impolitic, when pillars, railings, and massive beams, are made of such covetable materials. Sooner or later, all such decorations are sure to fall a prey to hostile cupidity, or to be expended on the necessities occasioned by some great social disorganization or national calamity. Were they merely overlaid on the substantial masonry, their removal would not involve its destruction, though it deprived it of such important decorations; but when employed in parts scarcely less important than the keystones of an arch, they seem placed to tempt the destruction of the edifice which they adorn with such dangerous charms. Even the bronze capitals and bases of the granite columns of St. Isaac's are liable to the same objection. How much, it may be asked, of the ruined temples of Egypt, Greece, Pæstum, or Palmyra, would now have been standing, if, instead of being composed of blocks of granite or marble, the capitals of their pillars, and their lintels and door-posts, had been made even of bronze? The church-builders of Russia, however, have not allowed the thought of foreign invasion, or any dread of the possibility of internal commotion, to enter into the modifying elements by which their architectural schemes were influenced. Every adjunct is in the same costly style. In the church of the convent of St. Alexander Nefskoi, the sarcophagus of the saint is composed of 3250 pounds' weight of silver; while in the older Cathedral of our Lady of Kasan, which that of St. Isaac will now supersede

on the most important state occasions, the picture of the Virgin displayed in one of its aisles is regarded with such reverence, that pearls and jewels to the value of 100,000 roubles, or about L.4000 sterling, have been used in adorning it. This, of course, is a moveable decoration, admitting, in the hour of danger, of removal or concealment, like all other adornments, apart from the essential structural features of the fabric.

Another class of decorations of the churches of St. Petersburg seems not unsuited to suggest such thoughts as we have referred to. The Kasan Cathedral, the Church of Peter and Paul in the Citadel, and various others of the principal churches, are adorned with the trophies of victory which have been wrested from various European and Asiatic nations. This is particularly the case with the Kasan Church, which has hitherto been the metropolitan cathedral; and foremost among these are prominently displayed the boastful evidences of Russian triumph, both in Europe and Asia:—Keys of various French, German, and Low Country towns, and of Turkish and Persian fortresses, which have been subjected to the arms of Russia by the fortunes of war. Batons of French marshals, which have fallen into their hands, tell of successes over the armies of Napoleon, or of the memorable campaign of 1812; while Turkish horse-tail standards, flags, and flag-staffs, surmounted by the silver hand as large as life, the symbol of Persia, or with the

THE CHURCHES OF ST. PETERSBURG.

crescent of Turkey, tell of Oriental triumphs won by the Russian armies. French eagles, and tattered, blood-stained banners, also give token of the untold deeds of heroism by which the soldiers of the empire struggled to the last to maintain the honour of those banners under which Napoleon so often led them to victory. Among the civic trophies thus displayed, are the keys of the cities of Hamburg, Leipzig, Dresden, Rheims, Breda, and Utrecht; and among the batons of famous field-marshal, that of the Prince of Eckmühl is pointed out with peculiar pride. Russia, however, is in no way singular in displaying only the memorials of war which tell of her victories. The French veteran may gaze on such trophies with much complacency, not unmindful of others won on many a well-fought field by those who appear there only as the vanquished.

Many other churches in St. Petersburg possess features which, in smaller capitals, would form objects of wonder and admiration. They mingle the gorgeousness and meretricious tinsel of an Oriental taste in a manner that, perhaps, adds to their attractions in the eye of the more civilized wanderer from the west of Europe. There are, in all, one hundred and forty churches in St. Petersburg, besides two large convents, with their chapels, and fifteen foreign places of worship.

The palaces, the museums, the Imperial Library, the Academy of Sciences, the Hôtel des Mines, and many others of the public buildings and institutions

of St. Petersburg, are no less worthy of attentive investigation by the traveller than the churches. Our purpose, however, is more with the illustrative stories of the country, and with the manners of the people, than with those descriptions which are most valued in the traveller's guide-book. Among the singular characteristics of Russia and its people which retain a distinctive nationality, even in its half-Europeanized capital, are the drosky and the drosky-driver of St. Petersburg; of which we shall here attempt some account.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DROSKY AND ITS DRIVER.

THE drosky of St. Petersburg is described by a recent traveller in Russia, as "one of the most absurd little vehicles ever invented." It is designed only for use during the brief summer of northern Russia; and as it is superseded during so large a portion of the year by the more easy and comfortable sledge, it has continued to retain its original rude and uncomfortable simplicity, amid all the imitations of the refinements of Paris, London, or Vienna, with which it is surrounded. Probably most of our readers have seen the velocipede, a locomotive machine now entirely out of use, but on which, not very many years since, gentlemen might be seen careering at a

rapid pace, along our thoroughfares, or through the public ~~parts~~. This consisted simply of a narrow pole, with a ~~seat~~, or rather saddle, in the centre, and a large wheel at either end; and, mounted astride this, its rider propelled himself, with his own feet on the ground. This exploded invention might be supposed to have formed the model of the awkward and inconvenient vehicle which forms the common hackney carriage in the streets of St. Petersburg. A low, narrow seat, covered with leather, and bearing some resemblance to the dismembered trunk of an old hobby-horse, is placed lengthways across the axles of four small wheels, between the two foremost of which is a box for the driver. On this the passenger mounts astride, with his feet placed in a pair of stirrups, or metal steps, which hang within an inch or two of the ground, and brush the mud before them as the drosky sweeps along. When two passengers have to be accommodated on this strange conveyance, its awkwardness and inconvenience become still more apparent; and yet, often as this must have been felt, no effort has been made to remedy it, or even to determine how it may be effected with least discomfort to the passengers. The most frequent way is, for the two to mount with their faces to each other, where they present about as sightly and comfortable an appearance as a pair of riders would do mounted on the same horse, and looking into each other's faces! When a lady is one of the riders, the gentleman mounts *en cavalier*, holding his companion in front of him, in

his lap; and, occasionally, two gentlemen may be seen to adopt this arrangement; but, whatever plan is tried, two passengers always look sufficiently awkward and ridiculous when mounted together on a St. Petersburg droshky. Similar examples of the national vehicle are to be seen at Moscow, and even at Odessa; but it is scarcely necessary to say, that they are not favourite conveyances with the ladies. They are used, however, even by Russian ladies of rank, without hesitation. Mr. John S. Maxwell, in "The Czar, his Court and People," thus graphically, though perhaps with somewhat of the prejudices of an American traveller, describes a scene he witnessed on his return from a short excursion on the Neva: "Several Russian ladies were smoking their cigars with great composure; among them, quite conspicuous for beauty of person and attire, was a countess. She was attended by a frowsy footman, in a suit of livery, which may once have been gay and handsome, but now was stained and spotted with time and filth. His chapeau was enormous, very antique, and not inappropriately termed by a companion, 'the last of the cocked hats!' When we reached St. Petersburg, the countess sent her lacquey for a droshky. Now, a common droshky is nothing but a bench resting upon springs, and running upon four wheels. Though intended for only one person, it will take two; so the beautiful countess seated herself sideways, in front, and the hideous lacquey a-straddle right behind her; and away they went, bouncing over

the pavement, a singular spectacle to unaccustomed eyes!"

Nothing but inveterate custom, and the national disinclination to change, could have prevented the rejection of this awkward and most inconvenient vehicle long ago. It is justly remarked of it: "What especial recommendation it can have in such a climate, and on such roads as may be seen in every Russian town, it would be impossible to discover. There is no kind of shelter in it. When it rains, the traveller is sure to be soaked; when there is mud, he is defiled to the eyes; when there is dust, he is choked; and when there is sun, he is roasted. In short, it is most ingeniously contrived for exposing him to the worst of every possible annoyance. Notwithstanding all these objections, however, the love for this vehicle by the native Russian seems one of the most marked of his national passions. The number of them in St. Petersburg is immense; but, as we have already shown, they are by no means confined to the capital, nor, indeed, to the large towns, but are to be met with in the remotest corners of the empire. Nothing could better serve to show the unreasoning obedience to Imperial example rendered by the native Russian, even where no command has imposed such necessity upon them; for it must be obvious to the most superficial reasoning, that the vehicle suited to the Russian capital, lying scarcely four degrees south of the latitude of Iceland, must be singularly unfit for the southern, or even the intermediate parts of a

kingdom which stretches, from north to south, from the 70th to the 38th degree of latitude."

Some notices have already been introduced, of the drotsky-driver, as a characteristic specimen of the native Russian of the lower classes. The following account, derived from Bremner's "Excursions in the Interior of Russia," &c., will afford a glimpse of some of the darker shades of his character: "The *isvoshtchik*, or driver," he observes, "is generally some peasant that has mustered money enough among his friends in the country to buy a good horse and hire a drotsky, in order to make a little fortune in the capital. His black hat and long blue garment are supposed to give him great dignity; but the filthy state in which his person generally seems to be, renders him by no means an enviable person to sit near. He drives extremely well; but has the character of being a great extortioner when a stranger comes in the way. 'How much must I pay for a drive to ——?' 'Five roubles' (equal to 4s. 2d.), is the answer. If you have Russian enough, offer him 8d.; and he is sure to take it. We always found, when in company with Russians, or with countrymen who speak the language, that we could drive an amazing distance for a small sum."

But extortion is by no means confined to the drivers of the hackney conveyances of St. Petersburg; and were that the worst reproach which could be brought against the *isvoshtchik*'s character, it would only prove him to be on a par with his country's

nobles, and government officials of every rank and degree. The following curious story, narrated by Bremner, exhibits the isvoshtchik's character in another and much more unfavourable light:—"An English gentleman at Moscow," says he, "told us that he had, the winter before, been the object of one of the most mysterious attacks ever heard of in drosky annals. On leaving the theatre, he had hired the first vehicle that presented itself, and ordered the owner to drive to a certain part of the city. After proceeding for a considerable time through the silent streets, then covered with deep snow, he remarked to his guide, that they were far out of the usual line; but received, for answer, that all would soon be right. On they went, the streets always getting more lonely and more unknown, when, suddenly, a man started from the corner of a cross-lane, and attempted to throw the noose of a large rope over the passenger; but, before it caught, he was able to disentangle himself, and urged the driver to press on. This command was so reluctantly complied with, that he now began to be suspicious of him, as an accomplice in the attack which had been made. Instead of holding on, he loitered and changed his course, evidently as if in consequence of a premeditated plan. This put the Englishman more on his guard, and he became anxious to leave him; but, before he had time to escape, he felt himself entangled in a strong noose, by which he was dragged from his seat. After trampling upon and bruising him, his assailants

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SLEDGE TRAVELLING IN THE WILDS OF RUSSIA.



not greatly dissimilar, which occurred at the palace of Whitehall, in the days of our merry monarch, Charles II :—

“The French ambassador was one day vaunting the dexterity of the Parisian thieves to one of the grand dukes, and related many anecdotes of their address. The Grand Duke was of opinion, that the St. Petersburg thieves were quite their equals; and offered to lay a wager, that, if the ambassador would dine with him the next day, he would cause his Excellency’s watch, signet-ring, or any other articles of his dress which he thought most secure, to be stolen from him before the dessert was over. The ambassador accepted the wager; and the Grand Duke sent immediately to the chief of the police, desiring him to send the adroitest thief he might happen to have in custody at the time. The man was dressed in livery, instructed what to do, and promised a pardon if he accomplished his task well. The ambassador had named his watch as the particular object of attention, both for himself and the thief; when he had got the watch, the supposed servant was to give the Grand Duke a sign.

“The dinner began; the preliminary whet, the soups and the rôti, came and disappeared in their turns; the red, white, Greek, Spanish, and French wines, sparkled successively in the glasses of the guests. The ambassador kept close guard on his watch; and the Grand Duke, observing his earnest anxiety, smiled, with good-humoured archness. The

pretended lacquey was busily assisting in the removal of the dishes; the dinner was nearly over, and the prince awaited with impatience the expected signal. Suddenly his countenance brightened; he turned to the ambassador, who was in deep conversation with his neighbour, and asked him what was the hour. His Excellency triumphantly put his hand to his pocket—he had it on his watch a few moments before—and to the amusement of all, but particularly of the Grand Duke, drew out a very neatly-cut turnip! A general laugh followed. The ambassador, somewhat embarrassed, would take a pinch of snuff, and felt in all his pockets for his gold snuff-box; it was gone! The laughter became louder. The ambassador, in his embarrassment and vexation, had recourse to his seal-ring, to turn it, as he was accustomed; it was gone! In short, he found that he had been regularly plundered of everything but what had been fastened on him by the tailor and the shoemaker—of ring, watch, snuff-box, handkerchief, toothpick, and gloves. The adroit rogue was brought before him, and commanded by the Grand Duke to give back the stolen property; when, to the great surprise of the prince, the pickpocket took out *two* watches, and presented one to the ambassador, and one to his Imperial Highness; two rings—one for the ambassador, and one for the Grand Duke; two snuff-boxes, &c. In astonishment, his Highness now felt in his pockets, as the ambassador had done, and found that he too had been stripped of his moveables in a like

manner. The Grand Duke solemnly assured the ambassador that he had been quite unconscious of the theft; and was disposed, at first, to be angry with the too dexterous artist. However, upon second thoughts, the fellow, who had enabled him to win his wager so triumphantly, was dismissed with a present, and a warning, to employ his talents in future to more useful purposes."

The Russian is so accustomed to the smooth, noiseless progress of his sleigh or drosky over the snow, which forms the paving of St. Petersburg during a large portion of the year, that he cannot be reconciled to the endurance of our rough granite paving during his brief summer. To this reason may be ascribed the preference for what is known among us, by the name of block-pavement, made of square or hexagonal sections of wood, cut across the grain, and embedded in sand and pitch; and which, after a very brief trial in London, has been abandoned, as equally costly and objectionable. The expense, which was great in London, is still more in Russia; for, though the wood is there easily procured, the frosts and wet rapidly destroy it, and render constant repairs necessary. But the will of the Emperor is abundantly sufficient to outweigh any considerations, either of cost or convenience. It is no unimportant matter, however, in a city where so much importance is attached to equipages; and where the block-paved Nefskoï, especially, is to be seen, at certain hours of the day, literally crowded with the showy equipages

of the nobility. Of these, some account may not unfitly accompany that of the singular hackney conveyances of Russia.

In our own country, some little importance is attached to the number of horses employed on occasions of state; but, in Russia, this forms one of the most important distinguishing badges of rank. "The equipages," says Mr. Bremner, "seen in this seductive quarter are most singular, and, to an English taste, most amusing. We do not speak of the active little droskies, gliding along in thousands at every hour of the day, but of the great lumbering equipages of the higher classes, seen only at the fashionable hours. In Russia, a man's rank is known by the number of horses he drives. One order of nobility, for instance, can drive two or three horses; but these are persons of very low dignity indeed. Another order can sport four; the one above it, six; and so on. A merchant, however rich he may be, cannot go beyond the small number allowed to his guild. The great point, therefore, is to have number, not quality; and four bad horses are thought much more of than two good ones worth treble the money. If a poor prince were to drive one less than his right, he might be taken for a rich count, which would be disgraceful. The consequence is, that you may often see the most singular mixture of steeds to one carriage—dissimilar in colour, size, paces. One thing, however, there is always sure to be—black straggling traces between the different pairs, shaking

most clumsily up and down, and so long, that Ducrow might leap his whole stud across the interval without troubling their noble master to stop.

"The coachman intrusted with this sorry squadron would appear to be selected by the size of his beard; in the same way that, in London, this functionary is chosen, as the French maintain, by the bulk of his person. He occupies a lofty seat, commanding a view of his whole charge; but the front pair is generally managed by a youth, seated on what we would call the *wrong* side, who has not yet acquired the honours of a beard, but tries to borrow dignity from a round black hat and long flowing blue coat—the most awkward garment possible for sitting on horseback with.

"The carriage itself is as uncouth as all the other parts of this untidy display. In fact, with their inclination to imitate everything foreign, it is surprising that the Russian nobility have not long since discarded their unseemly equipages, and adopted our English style, as most other nations are trying to do. *Four* horses abreast, which are often seen, look very well; and we were still better pleased with four abreast and *two in front*.

"They have one kind of vehicle which looks extremely smart—a sort of drosky, but very different from the common one; in fact, a cabriolet without the head, on four low wheels, drawn by two, sometimes three horses abreast; of which, the one in the shafts is always kept at a furious trot, while the others are

advancing at a gallop. These latter, being trained to bend the head and curve the neck outwards, give a most graceful look to the concern, as they bound along, with their long manes floating about them. None but the finest horses are ever seen in this gay vehicle. It is the favourite equipage of the young noblemen and rich officers, and is also much used by the Emperor in his flights about the city. An attempt has been made to imitate it at Berlin; and it is likely to become fashionable in other capitals."

CHAPTER XII.

RELIGION IN RUSSIA.

MOST travellers who have described minutely the Russian people, speak of them as presenting many traits which appear to the stranger to have more of an Oriental than a European air. The same, also, may be said of their religious worship. It appears to engraft on the customs and practices of the Romish Church many things closely resembling those which may be witnessed in the Mohammedan mosque.

Some interesting reflections on this subject are recorded by Charles Boileau Elliott, in his "Letters from the North of Europe," published in 1832. "The religion of the Greek Church," says he, "was adopted by the Russians in the tenth century; being established without opposition by an order of the

Grand Duke Vladimir, the first convert to Christianity, who sent emissaries to various Churches of Christendom, for the purpose of observing the forms of each. Since his object was to influence the ignorant through the medium of the senses, his choice was not injudicious; for there is something in the service of the Greek Church that rivets the attention far more than that of the Roman Catholic. There probably is not more real religion, but there is a greater appearance of devotion. The devotees seem to be more in earnest, and to have more personal faith in the virtue of the rites they celebrate. This may arise, in part, from the ignorance and intellectual debasement of the Russians, compared with that of the Catholics one has seen in more enlightened countries; but it is, doubtless, attributable also to a certain something difficult to describe, but in which no one who has been in the habit of attending Greek and Romish services can fail to sympathize. Is it that, in the former, instrumental music is excluded, while words of prayer and praise arrest the mind, chanted in the deep sonorous voices of the priests; and that, to sounds of definite import, we are loth to attach ideas which impugn the reality of feeling and the veracity of sacred functionaries: while, in the latter, full bursts of the organ overpower the voices, and give to the whole the effect of a display of sacred music? Or is it that, in the Greek Church, the service is performed in a language intelligible to the congregation; while, in the Romish, a learned jargon

is adopted, always incomprehensible to the people, and often to the illiterate priesthood? Or is it, possibly, that here there is no bowing down to carved and graven images: and though worship scarcely inferior is paid to highly-wrought designs on tapestry and canvass; yet, being familiar with such productions of art exhibited in our own temples, and regarding them with an interest which the subjects render almost sacred, we are reluctant to believe that the Russian devotee converts his gaze into sin by the admixture of an irrational and idolatrous sentiment? Or is it, that we are more disposed to resign ourselves to sacred feelings inspired by the ceremonies of a church tolerating our own dissentient creed, than to those that might otherwise result from the services of one which marshals our strongest prejudices in array against itself, by denouncing us as heretics and accursed? Something, perhaps, is due to each of these causes; much to the union of all; and not a little to the fact, that the Greek Church, though itself scarcely purer, holds in equal abhorrence with ourselves the abominations of that apostasy against which our own has *protested*, and still maintains an incessant spiritual warfare.

“The doctrines of the Russian Church are precisely those of the Greek; and so is its constitution, except that the former has cast off all allegiance to the Patriarch of Constantinople, and acknowledges no head but the Emperor. This secession from the Eastern Church took place under Peter the Great,

who found that the patriarch possessed more influence in his dominions than consisted with his own autocracy. The ecclesiastical government is now in the hands of a synod held periodically at St. Petersburg, and formed of clergy, under the presidency of a layman.

“The Greek, like the Romish clergy, are divided into secular and monastic. The former are generally men of low birth, and very illiterate. Possessing no influence, from either rank or erudition, they seldom rise in their associations above the lowest orders of society. The profession usually descends from father to son; consequently, men are brought into the Church by the mere contingencies of birth, devoid of all religious feeling, and even against inclination. Hence their immoral lives and the total neglect of their cures. A secular priest is obliged to be a married man. While single, he is not admissible to ordination; but, once in orders, he must remain ‘the husband of one wife:’ if she die, he is not allowed to wed another. The priests are paid by the produce of lands appropriated to them by the crown in the middle of the eighteenth century; by gratuities for the celebration of mass in the house of the *seigneurs*; and by fees on occasions of marriages and births. They wear broad-brimmed hats and loose robes of any colour. The hair is allowed to flow down the back, and cherished, with Israelitish pride, on the chin.

“The monastic clergy are subject to rules similar

to those by which the same body is governed in the Romish Church. They are distinguished by a high conical cap, long veil, and black gown. The discipline of monasteries is very severe; and vows once entered into, admit of no dispensation. The regular clergy are divided into seven grades; through which they rise according to merit or interest. The first is that of monk; then prior, *hegoumenos* (or abbot of a smaller institution), and archimandrite (or abbot of a large monastery): to these succeed the higher orders of bishop, archbishop, and metropolitan. In education, they are said to be greatly superior to the secular clergy, and no doubt are so; but their ignorance of foreign languages, if I may judge from three whom we encountered in the monastery of St. Alexander Nevski, the principal monastic institution in St. Petersburg, forms a curious exception to the general acquaintance with other tongues displayed by the Russians as a nation. The three monks referred to were addressed by our party, anxious to elicit some information regarding the monastery, in French, Italian, German, Latin, and English; but the only reply we could obtain was a sentence of Russ.


“No Russian is at liberty to change his religion, under pain of banishment to Siberia; at the same time, great liberality is exercised towards Fins, Livonians, and foreigners in general; and it is an interesting fact, bespeaking the religious toleration of the government, that, in the street in which the Greek Church of the Virgin of Kasan is situated, Catholics,

Armenians, Lutherans, and three other sects of Protestants, have their respective places of worship."

The festivals of the Greek Church are numerous; and Russia has not abridged it of any of these, in establishing it under her autocratic livery. Fasts and feasts are attended to with a zeal surpassing even that of Italy or Spain; and, during the time devoted to their celebration, the whole character of society is affected by the customs of the season. The most important of these, that of Easter, has already been described, when the whole of Russian society, from the imperial palace to the hovel of the serf, resounds with the joyous cry of *Christohs voskress!* (Christ has arisen!) and "all Russia breaks out into an Oriental exuberance of kisses." For the time being, indeed, all distinctions of rank seem to disappear. The habit of giving a personal salute obtains at all times among the Russians, to an extent unknown in any other country of Europe. After a gentleman has been introduced to a lady, he kisses her hand whenever they meet, while she gracefully returns the compliment on his cheek. But, during the Easter festival, a noble lady cannot refuse a kiss from the meanest peasant, if he advance with an egg in his hand, as the token that the prolonged fast of Lent is at an end, and addresses to her the salutation of *Christohs voskress*. She is under the obligation, according to her Church's training, to receive the peasant's egg with courtesy, and to return the kiss, with the reply, *Vies tiny voskress* (Truly he is risen). This habit,

however, which would be liable to such great abuse in some countries, is not likely to be employed otherwise than with devout simplicity by the quiet and docile peasantry of Russia, so long accustomed to yield, with submissive silence, to all that their superiors may exact of them.

The religion of the Russian, however, is by no means confined to the services of appointed festivals and holidays. Were it only a thing of the heart and the understanding, they would be an example to all nations; for, assuredly, it mingles with every duty and practice of daily life. How much it is otherwise, however, will be apparent from some of the descriptions which eye-witnesses have supplied to us, of the customary manifestations of religious feeling among the Russian people. "To a stranger," says Mr. Bremner, "the genuine new-caught Russian is worth all his civilized superiors in the empire. Wherever he may be seen, he is a most interesting subject for study; but nowhere more than in church. Follow him into the beautiful temple of the Virgin of Kasan, and you find him on his knees, repeating his prayers after the priest, with a fluency which nothing can arrest, and a devotion which nothing can distract. Pass him, or jostle him as you may, he is too deeply engaged with his pious work to take the least notice of you. It is always painful to be present, an unconcerned spectator, where a religious service is going forward in which the heart cannot join. We feel as if intruding on that which we have no right to wit-



ness, and seem to scoff without wishing to do so. In Russia, however, there is no occasion for feeling thus. Let the stranger take off his hat on entering, and he is no more looked at than one of the pillars: he disturbs nobody.

“ We are here surrounded by splendour. The noble simplicity of the design—two long pillared aisles in the form of a cross—only renders the richness of the materials more conspicuous. From a floor of the costliest marble, the eye rises to a light and lofty dome, spangled with stars of gold, that twinkle from a sky of the deepest blue. There is neither gallery nor buttress to break the fine height. Even the dais, occupied by the priests, scarcely breaks the general outline; it is but a simple step or two, not far from the entrance. There they stand, in strong array, with long beards flowing over their robes of embroidered crimson, and wearing a lofty black hat, that gives yet more dignity to their stately forms. Their deep rich voices make the vaults ring, as they chant the prayers, aided by a band of bearded choristers, ranged beside singing-desks, within a side-railing. Great care being taken in training the singers, this part of the service is always exceedingly impressive; finer voices we have never heard.

“ But the crowd of worshippers is the most interesting sight. Every person, as he enters, kisses the sacred picture near the door, or tries to reach that hanging on the wall; to which latter, as it is of more than ordinary sanctity, you may see parents raising

their little infants, that they too may touch it with their lips. Of these effigies, as hinted elsewhere, the more sacred usually have the brow, the cheeks, and the arms, covered with silver, the votive offerings of the pious, whose gratitude to the saint whom he thus seeks to honour for deliverance from sickness or danger, has overcome his taste; for the appearance given to the picture by this tinsel covering is truly ludicrous. What makes them more hideous to the indifferent spectator, however, only gives them greater attraction in the eyes of the faithful. To these, accordingly, the people flock in greatest numbers.

“His salutation over, the peasant selects a place for himself on the floor, as near the priest as possible. There is a woman in one of the aisles, with a small table or basket before her, selling long slender tapers; and from her the more devout make a purchase, and, lighting it, set their offering on one of the little triangular frames of wood planted among the pillars, and stuck all over with nails for attaching these gifts to. Though it be Sabbath, many workmen are busy polishing some steps with pumice, within a few feet of the officiating priests; but no one is distracted by the noise: the people come here to pray, not to look about them.

“The mutterings and prostrations of the worshippers are most singular. Some, on the outskirts of the assembly, may remain standing; but the greater part have their knees bent to the naked floor. At certain words, however, all, both those who were

standing and those who kneel, strike their very foreheads on the earth with great vehemence, uttering, at the same time, some words from the priest; and this again and again before the service is finished. Some poor old women are always the most conspicuous in these violent manœuvres; but all ages and classes, and both sexes, join with more or less ardour. At vespers, we have seen most respectably-dressed ladies going through the whole ceremony with great fury. In short, the mummary of their religion surpasses all that we had previously witnessed. There is nothing like it in Catholic countries; it can only be compared to the violence of some of the Hindus. One can scarcely describe the emotion which he feels on seeing a crowded assembly going through all these crossings, and attitudes, and genuflexions, so strange and so outrageous. It is impossible not to be moved with sorrow for those who look upon such things as constituting religion.

“Whether this extreme attention to *forms* be accompanied with any real religious *knowledge*, is a question which few foreigners are qualified to decide. Judging, however, from what we were told by Russians themselves, we cannot hesitate to say, that, with the lower orders in this country, religion is little better than superstition. Of the true nature of the great atonement, they are utterly ignorant; and even of the first principle of all religion, the existence of a Supreme, they entertain the most imperfect notions. With the boor, God is only something

higher than the Emperor. They think not of Him as an omnipotent spiritual Being, but as one residing they know not where, who will punish them for neglecting church and their prescribed forms, nearly in the same way as they would be punished for disobeying a mandate of the Emperor. Of a future state, their notions are also very indefinite.

“In short, as has often been said before now, ‘the Russian’s religion consists in being able to *make the sign of the cross*.’ He is crossing himself all day long. When he first comes forth into the open air, in the morning, if no church be in sight from his own door, he listens for the first sound of some bell; then, turning towards it, crosses himself with great fervour, to ensure a blessing on the undertakings of the day. He crosses himself before and after each meal. When you make a bargain with him, he crosses himself, that it may prosper; when his countryman spits upon him (as they do by way of anathema when in anger with each other), he meekly crosses himself, to avert the curse; when the peasant who is to drive you takes the reins in his hand, he crosses himself, to keep away accidents; and every steeple he passes gets the same mark of respect. Sometimes the edifice thus saluted is so far off, that the stranger wonders at the quickness shown in discovering it, and is often at a loss to catch the distant hamlet where it stands. In like manner, the person sitting beside you in any public conveyance crosses himself every time you start with new horses. What the old do

thus frequently, the young of course imitate. If you give a child a piece of money, its little hand is up in a moment to make the sign of the cross, by way of blessing and thanking you.

“ Much of this crossing work may be seen at all hours, even in the streets ; for, whether in the city or in the country, no Russian ever passes a church without pausing, when he comes opposite its centre, to make the sign of the cross, from brow to breast, and utter some pious ejaculation prescribed for the occasion. This operation may be seen going on incessantly before every church of the capital ; and, on the most frequented walks, there are certain small places like shrines, with pictures and gilding in them, in front of which it is also performed. It is not alone the grave and the aged who pause at these places. but also the giddy and the young. You have just seen some gray-haired general do it ; but, wait one minute—a laughing band of youngsters is coming up. Now they are opposite the church or the shrine ; their mirth and their talk have ceased. Each crosses himself devoutly, utters a prayer or two—you see his lips moving—then passes gravely on ; the laugh and the jest being resumed only when they are some way off.

“ So far is this crossing mania carried, that, when a Russian enters your room, he cannot say ‘ Good morning ! ’ till he has crossed himself to the Saviour’s picture. A man in any public way, such as an inn-keeper, must always have a picture hung in his own

apartment, in addition to that in the public room, to which each Russian turns before he sits down to eat. While at breakfast at an inn one morning, in a small room off the public one, we were roused by the solemn chanting of a priest in his robes, whom we found, with his attendants, praying before the picture of our Saviour in the corner. Waiting to learn how the ceremony would close, we saw abundance of the usual signing; with the painted wooden crucifix in his hand, about a foot long, he made the sign of the cross towards each of the four corners, and withdrew. It appears that some of the priests have little to live by, beyond the offerings obtained from the people for these chantings and crossings before their sacred images, or for saying prayers in families on high holidays."

Along with other Oriental traits of character which distinguish the Russians, they are almost as complete fatalists as the Turks; and so far does this influence their practice in daily life, that, notwithstanding the extremely fatal prevalence of small-pox, vaccination has been violently opposed as an impious attempt to thwart the decrees of heaven. From nearly similar feelings and motives, many successive attempts to establish insurance companies even in St. Petersburg have failed; and it is only very recently that the practice of insuring houses, or property of any description, against fire, has been fairly introduced there.

The miracle-working powers of the pictures in the Russian churches, fully equal any even effected by

crucifixes or statues in the darkest periods of Romish superstition. One of the churches of Moscow was long celebrated for a picture of the Virgin, who, though hanging on the wall, and presenting all the wonted superficial flatness of a mere painted canvass, or panel, was yet wont, on certain occasions, to reward her most liberal devotees, not only by extending her head beyond the general surface, and bowing graciously to the favoured worshipper; but it was even rumoured that she had bodily left the canvass on certain rare occasions, and been seen by credible witnesses, in different parts of the city, on her way to award some special spiritual bounty to those whom she delighted to honour! This miraculous picture belonged to the brotherhood of a large monastery in Moscow; and, as the rumour spread, the conventual church was soon crowded with worshippers, anxious to propitiate the miraculous picture by liberal gifts to its curators, and thereby, if possible, to share in her favours. The basin of consecrated water, placed near the door, had to be frequently replenished; for furnished, as is the custom in Russia, with a ladle not unlike that which is to be seen often hung from an English parish pump, this is applied to the same purpose, the devotees each drinking off a ladleful of the holy beverage! From thence they hastened to kiss the picture of the Virgin, the feet of which could alone be reached, as it hung on the wall. Mothers might be seen holding up their infants, that their lips might touch the Virgin's feet, and little

children were brought from great distances, and held up for the same purpose.

Wealth flowed in to the convent possessed of so popular a treasure; donations of money, jewels, and ornaments of every kind, were bestowed; and the bowing Virgin became quite the rage. It is not, however, safe even for a painted Virgin, in Russia, to attract too much attention. Probably the jealousy of rival and less fortunate conventual institutions led to accusations against the brotherhood. Political plots were whispered to have been discovered lurking under the wonderful phenomena of the painted Virgin; and several of the leading officials of the convent purchased, by their brief season of triumph, a journey to Siberia. Thus warned, the Virgin shrunk back to her mere ordinary attractions as a painted canvass, and ceased to receive even the ordinary attentions paid to pictures which had advanced no pretensions to such extraordinary power.

The following description of one of the most popular painted Virgins of Moscow, the "Iverskaya Boshia Mater," may serve to illustrate the practice of such devotees as those that crowded to do honour to the miraculous picture of the conventual church. The "Iberian Mother" came originally from the modern Georgia, the country of the Iberians. From thence her first removal was to Mount Athos, and there her reputation for miraculous power became so great, that the Russian Czar, Alexis Michaelovitsh, invited her to Moscow, where she has since fixed her abode. The locality of this favourite

picture is in an open area, by the Vosskressensk Gate. "She herself, however," says Kohl, "is in a kind of sanctuary, hollowed out at the further end. The immediate space in front is adorned with many pictures of saints, and filled with silver candlesticks, and other glittering ware. She sits in the half-darkened background, in the midst of gold and pearls. Like all Russian saints, she has a dark-brown, almost black complexion. Round her head she has a net made of real pearls. On one shoulder a large jewel is fastened, shedding brightness around, as if a butterfly had settled there. Such another butterfly rests on her brow, above which glitters a brilliant crown. In one corner of the picture, on a silver plate, is inscribed, *ἡ μητήρ Θεοῦ Τῶν Ἰβερῶν*. Around the picture are gold brocaded hangings, to which angels' heads, painted on porcelain, with silver wings, are sewn: the whole is lighted up by thirteen silver lamps. Beside the picture there are a number of drawers, containing wax tapers, and books having reference to her history. Her hand and the foot of the child are covered with dirt, from the abundant kissing; it sits like a crust in little raised points, so that long since it has not been hand and foot that have been kissed, but the concrete breath of pious lips. The doors of the chapel stand open the whole day, and all are admitted who are in sorrow and heavy laden; and this includes here, as everywhere else, a considerable number. I often beheld with astonishment the multitudes that streamed in, testi-

fyng the inordinate power which this picture exercises over their minds. None ever pass, however pressing their business, without bowing and crossing themselves. The greater part enter, kneel devoutly down before 'the Mother,' and pray with fervent sighs. Here come the peasants early in the morning, before going to market; they lay aside their burdens, pray a while, and then go their way. Hither comes the merchant, on the eve of a new speculation, to ask the assistance of the angels hovering round 'the Mother.' Hither come the healthy and the sick, the wealthy, and those who would become so; the arriving and the departing traveller, the fortunate and the unfortunate, the noble and the beggar. All pray, thank, supplicate, sigh, laud, and pour out their hearts before 'the Mother.' There is really something touching in seeing the most sumptuously-clad ladies, glittering with jewels, leave their splendid equipages and gallant attendants, and prostrate themselves in the dust with the beggars. On a holiday, I once counted two hundred passing pilgrims, kneeling down before 'the Iberian Mother;' and thought, with astonishment, of the importance of this little spot of ground. Since Alexis, the Czars have never failed to visit it frequently. The present Emperor never omits to do so, when he comes to Moscow. It is said that he has come more than once in the middle of the night, and wakened the monks, in order that he might perform his devotions.

"The picture is also, if desired, carried to the houses

of sick persons. For this purpose, a carriage with four horses is kept constantly ready, in which it is transported with pomp; not the real picture, but a copy that hangs in the fore-chapel: at least so said the attendants at the chapel; but others contradicted it, and said that the copy remained behind for passing worshippers, and the original was carried to the sick. The visit costs five roubles, and a voluntary present is usually made to the monks.

“I had almost forgotten to mention the principal thing, namely, that there is a very little scratch in the right cheek, that distils blood. This wound was inflicted, nobody knows when or how, by Turks or Circassians, and exactly this it is by which the miraculous powers of the picture were proved; for scarcely had the steel pierced the canvass, than the blood trickled from the painted cheek. In every copy the painter has represented this wound, with a few delicate drops of blood. As I was speaking of this and other miracles to a monk, he made, to my imprudent question, whether miracles were now daily wrought by it, the really prudent reply, ‘Why, yes, if it be God’s pleasure, and when there is faith; for it is written in the Bible, that faith alone blesses.’”

Such stories of miracle-working pictures are endless. It is easy to see that where superstitious credulity is so rife, the monks and priests, who are dependent on such devotees, will take care that it do not die out for lack of full means of gratification. It is not to be supposed, however, that such credulity is altogether

confined to the laity. This will be apparent from the notice of a visit paid to the Tshudoff Monastir, or Convent of the Miracle, at Moscow. The traveller talked long and pleasantly with his monkish guide on ordinary subjects. "He told me," says he, "many things which I no longer remember, conversing rationally enough, till on mention being made of miracles, he began all at once to recount a story of some saint's picture of the town of Moshaisk, that betrayed all the childlike facility of faith so peculiar to the Russians. The French, who, in their *belle France*, little dream of the many miracles they gave occasion to in the year 1812, were also in that little town which lies east of Moscow, and pointed their profane cannon at a picture which had till then been ranked among ordinary ones, but which, on that occasion, became all at once imbued with wonder-working power. The French, it was said, shot thirty-two balls at the picture, not one of which hit the mark, all remaining fixed round in a circle, 'as may yet be seen.' The violent concussion, however, struck off many fragments of stone, all of which the picture could not of course repair, as they were countless. Some of them struck the picture, and caused wounds whence blood flowed, which announced its miraculous quality."

This miracle is of a piece with all the rest. None of them have any pretence to be of the slightest use; and they are narrated by otherwise intelligent men with a trusting and childish simplicity, calculated to amuse or to pain the mind, according to the disposi-

tion of the listener to regard such only as a manifestation of childish credulity, or as a melancholy proof of the gross darkness and manifestly idolatrous superstition under which the whole of this vast nation lies.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EXILES OF SIBERIA.

A ROMANTIC, though deeply painful, interest attaches to the associations with the penal settlements of Russia in the inhospitable wilds of Siberia. The account of Siberia and its exiles, contained in the delightful French tale of Madame Cottin, has been authenticated by Russian travellers, as presenting a picture, in many respects, closely corresponding with actual facts; though her topographical descriptions are far from accurate. She represents the Siberian region as mountainous, and exposed to the dangers which menace the natives of the Alps, from avalanches, snow-slips, &c., whereas it corresponds to the more southern Asiatic steppes, and is one of the flattest regions of the globe.

To this, criminals of every class and grade are sent—political offenders, nobles, and officers of state, who have in any way given offence to the despotic power which reigns supreme; offenders against law in every form, and even vagabonds, whose sole crime is the want of any definite mode of subsistence. These form

the convict colonists of Northern Asiatic Russia, and may lead to the permanent occupation of vast regions long abandoned, or, at most, but visited by a few wandering and unsettled nomades. In 1835, the total number of exiled convicts in Eastern and Western Siberia, according to government returns, was 97,121; and, as these are necessarily accompanied with a large military guard, as well as very frequently with the relatives of the unhappy convicts, it is obvious that a very large population is thus permanently established in Siberia.

It is difficult for us to conceive of such a state of things as prevails throughout the vast empire of Russia, where its whole population is practically subject to the will of one man. A secret police, and a well-organized system of espionage, render all captive within the mysterious meshes of an invisible, yet ubiquitous and all-powerful net. Among the nobles that attend on the court of Nicholas, and obsequiously wait around his throne, are those whose fathers, and brothers, and sisters, are pining in Siberia, sometimes without their even knowing the offence for which they have been condemned to banishment. Occasionally, instances are brought to light of milder punishments, designed as a warning to those who are unguardedly trespassing on dangerous ground; but even such *tender mercies* are sufficiently characteristic of a despotic and irresponsible power.

One of these, recently narrated by a Polish writer, though, perhaps, tinged with the natural prejudices

of a Pole against the oppressors and enslavers of his country, is not inconsistent with trustworthy information derived from other sources. The Countess of N——, a young Russian lady, had, by her intercourse with foreigners at St. Petersburg, and by other means, been led to entertain feelings of the liveliest sympathy for the Poles, and especially for many of those of noble birth, who had been compelled to enter the Russian army, or remained in the country as civilians, generally subject to great privations, and jealously excluded from official favour or position in society. Influenced alone by the generous sympathies of a true womanly heart, unchilled by the prudential dictates which self-interest and experience too soon infuse into the breast of the most guileless when exposed to such a system, the Countess of N—— employed herself in administering liberally to the wants of such of the unfortunate Polish nobles as came within her sphere. As the claimants on her bounty increased, she interested some of her friends in the same cause, and thus, by degrees, a friendly charitable association was organized, in which she took the lead. Amid the endless ramifications of the Russian spy system, such a state of things could not long continue undivulged, and the Countess received more than one hint that her proceedings were known and disapproved of in high quarters. No political ends, however, had ever mingled with the charities of this benevolent association, though the warmth of their sympathy for the


suffering Poles was, in itself, evidence enough of the Russian crime of *liberalism*. Strong, however, in the consciousness of her disinterested benevolence and perfect integrity of purpose, the Countess of N—— pursued her secret charities, for the most part, with such privacy, that even the recipients of it were generally ignorant of the source of the contributions which came so opportunely to the relief of their wants.

The Countess, it is said, availed herself on one occasion of the great masked ball, which annually takes place in the Bolskoi Theatre, during the Butter Week, to appeal to the Emperor personally, under the disguise of a mask, against the system of espionage, and the interference of the police with charities, which had no other aim than the relief of a class of sufferers having peculiar claims on those who still lived in the enjoyment of all the luxuries and privileges of social rank, from which the unhappy nobles of Warsaw had been degraded. On no subject, however, is the Emperor less open to any appeal than on that of Poland. The acquisition of its dismembered provinces, and the general extension of the Russian kingdom on every side, form objects of Russia's policy and ambition, with which no mere humane or generous sympathies are allowed to interfere. The Countess escaped, as she believed, undiscovered; but this may be doubted, as the endless ramifications of the secret police of St. Petersburg are not likely to leave unguarded so important an

assembly as the great masked ball, where many are ready to avail themselves of this sole opportunity of addressing the Emperor in person, and even unknown to him. Kohl, who attended the masked ball in 1837, remarks: "Wherever the Emperor placed himself, he seemed to regulate the movements of all around him, as a strong magnet does the iron. Everywhere a respectful circle of staring spectators formed round him, but were kept within their own orbit by some invisible power. Wherever he could, his Imperial Majesty mingled with his subjects, and went diligently up stairs and down stairs. The young ladies in dominoes flocked curiously about him, and those he took good-naturedly on his arm and walked about with them, exciting them to jest with him. Many ladies, who cannot in any other way approach him, attend this ball, merely for the sake of hanging for once on the Emperor's arm. He never was at a loss for an answer, but replied very graciously to all that was said to him. As I passed him once, I heard the mask upon his arm say: 'Ah! comme tu es beau!' 'Oh, oui,' answered the Emperor, 'but if you had seen what I was formerly!' Another mask said to him: 'Il y a peu de dames aujourd'hui.' 'Oui, mais quant à moi, je suis content, je te prends pour cent.' One fair lady, however, seemed to weary him with her obtrusiveness, and, as he caught sight of one of his nobles, he fastened her upon his arm, saying, 'Voilà, T——, une jolie petite dame pour toi.' The nobleman walked about with her for awhile, and

then took an opportunity of civilly getting rid of her. I was glad, for the poor belle's sake, that she was so closely masked."

When, on such occasions, the fair masker's conversation proves unacceptable, not from its insipidity, but its opposition to the imperial views and opinions, the Emperor's obsequious attendants will have other duties devolve on them than merely civilly getting rid of her. The Countess of N——, however, entertained no apprehensions, and, on receiving a command some short time afterwards to wait on the head of the secret police, she drove to his office, without any special fear or preparations for her reception by that dread official. On alighting, she was at once shown through a suite of chambers to an inner room, where he awaited her; and, on being left alone with him, he showed a letter, written to her by one of the Polish recipients of her bounty, who, having found out his anonymous benefactor, had unhappily taken this means of conveying his thanks to her. The letter had been opened at the post-office, doubtless under the orders of the police, and was now produced as the evidence against her of criminal liberality. No opportunity for explanation or defence was permitted; but the lady, being suddenly seized at a preconcerted signal, was placed so that she could be violently scourged by an unseen executioner. After being subjected to this shameful indignity, the Countess was dismissed, with the advice to abstain from any further displays of Polish sympathy, and to preserve,



as her own secret, the treatment to which she had been exposed, which was only designed as a friendly warning to avert worse consequences. The Countess did not, however, so entirely follow the counsel of the police as they desired. She communicated the outrage she had been subjected to to some of her friends, probably as an effectual reason for the abrupt termination of her benevolent proceedings. One of these, a young nobleman of liberal sympathies, indignant at such unmanly treatment of a lady, found occasion to fasten a quarrel on the son of the head of the police, who was an officer in the army; and challenging him to a duel, he shot him dead. In this he made for himself an implacable and all-powerful enemy, and his own sudden death, while lying in concealment from the myrmidons of the police, alone saved him from banishment to the inhospitable wilds of Siberia.

Other *friendly* warnings are of a less violent character. A well-known anecdote tells of another noble lady of St. Petersburg, who had been imprudent enough to converse openly with a foreigner on the institutions of her country, and to condemn, with the guileless freedom of a woman, some of the most galling evils of its despotic government. As the lady retired from the ball where she had been guilty of such indiscretion, she was driven directly to the bureau of the head of the secret police, without being aware of it, till she alighted there, instead of at the door of her own mansion, as she had supposed. There

she was summarily informed of her condemnation of banishment to Siberia; and without being allowed an interview with a single friend, or even an opportunity of exchanging her gay costume for a more suitable travelling dress, she was hurried into another vehicle, and driven off to her destination in the inhospitable wilds of Russia's penal settlements. The carriage in which she was now placed was kept entirely closed, and the officer who accompanied her, while he prevented communication with any one without, resolutely declined all conversation with her. The only alleviation to the monotonous and protracted suffering of hurrying along in a closed carriage, abandoned to her own melancholy thoughts, was the stopping at certain stages, where the horses and guard were changed, and she was allowed for a few minutes to alight, after being blindfolded, and was conducted into a rude wooden building or post-house. In one of these, at the end of the first day's journey, she was allowed a few hours' repose, on a rough truckle bed. In the same way the unhappy lady was hurried on, during a second and third day, with an ever widening distance, as she believed, from friends and hope, and all that made life supportable. It struck her, however, as she grew more calm, that there was a remarkable similarity between the various post-houses at which they stopped, and, blindfolded as she was, she contrived to secrete a ribbon torn from her dress, in a crevice of the wood, during one of these stoppages,

Hope revived in her breast on discovering, at the second stoppage, that they had returned to the same post-house; and pursuing her observations, she at length satisfied herself that she was being driven all the time between two stations. She kept her discovery to herself, and at the end of the third day, on the bandage being removed from her eyes, she found herself once more in the bureau of the chief officer of the secret police, having in reality spent the previous three days in driving back and forward on the great post-road, within a few miles of St. Petersburg. She was now dismissed with a warning not to give her tongue license again in the same dangerous course, if she would avoid realizing the frightful exile to which she had for a time believed herself to be actually doomed. Such are specimens of the friendly tender mercies of the Russian secret police; and they are not unfit to serve as an introduction to some of the actual horrors of the system to which they belong.

The penalty incurred for the crime of sympathizing with the suffering Poles has already been seen, and may suggest the probable treatment of those Polish patriots whose resistance to Russian power has exposed them to its wrath. These have been driven by hundreds, on the long journey to Siberia, linked in gangs with the lowest felons, and subjected to the same degradation and sufferings as those who had been convicted of the worst of crimes. This, indeed, it is which gives so peculiarly painful an aspect to the dungeons and penal settlements of Russia.

Horrible as the torture of the knout must appear to every feeling mind, and terrible as an exile of thousands of miles into the arctic steppes of Asia must be, we should judge of these very differently were they reserved alone for the convicted criminal. The Newgate, Botany Bay, and Macquarrie's Island of England are sufficiently horrible. The misery and the hideous crimes engendered among the convicts in some of our own penal settlements have indeed proved appalling, and the recent disclosure of them has excited such a sensation in the public mind, as is not unlikely to lead to a total change in the system. But the sufferers by this system are the vicious, the profligate, and the most hardened of our criminal population—the thief, the robber, and the reprieved murderer; whereas the dungeons and penal settlements of Russia include thousands whose sole crimes are patriotism, liberality of sentiment, or offence against the *amour propre* of some base but all-powerful official, against whose vindictive award there is as little appeal as against that of the Spanish Inquisition. The miseries attendant on such a cruel and arbitrary system are doubtless aggravated in the case of very many of its victims, by their suffering indiscriminately with the lowest outcasts of society, as well as with the poor serfs, who can be despatched to Siberia at any moment, at the will of their master; the serf being thus in the same relation to his lord, as the noble himself is to the Emperor and his myrmidons.

The cruelty with which this arbitrary power may be abused, was shown in a case which occurred while Mr. Bremner was in Russia, though in this instance the executors of law interfered to a certain extent on the side of mercy and justice. A licentious nobleman having desired to have the wife of one of his peasantry entirely in his power, in order to get rid of the husband, banished him to Siberia. There was no appeal against such injustice, and no hope of escape for the poor peasant. The law is inexorable, and the proprietor's right to dispose of his serf is as unlimited as that of the planter of the Southern States in America to do what he pleases with his slave. In one respect, however, the policy of Russia leans towards the side of mercy in dealing with the Siberian exiles. The system is one of colonization as well as of banishment, and considerable facilities are accordingly usually furnished to wives and families willing to join the expatriated victim. The poor serf availed himself of this to make an application to have his wife sent along with him, and she seconded his suit with equal eagerness. Thereupon the nobleman again interposed his right, and refused his consent, without which no serf can leave the estate to which he or she belongs. The infamous abuses to which such an exercise of power was open, were recognised even by the law authorities of the Russian crown; and at the time of Mr. Bremner's visit to Moscow, where he learned of this, the crown lawyers were attempting to maintain the position, that though

a proprietor could not be compelled to part with the wife of one of his peasants condemned by the ordinary courts, yet, in the case of one condemned by the proprietor's own sentence, he is not entitled to detain the wife, if she is willing to go. Such a modicum of mercy as this was a small boon of justice to the poor banished peasant, whose Siberian exile originated solely in the despotic tyranny of an absolute master. Yet even the liberty of his wife to share his exile had not been conceded when the traveller left Russia. In a country, indeed, where *justice* is ever to be bought, and where bribery is practised as a system by every official, what can be the chances of the poor serf in such a contest? "Even in Austria," says a recent traveller, "where they understand such things very well, they are mere tyros in the science of bribery, compared with the Russians. It grinds the poor, and impoverishes the rich; it is practised in every branch of the administration, from the lowest clerk to the highest minister; it paralyzes industry, enterprise, and merit in every corner of the empire."

The present Emperor is believed to have a strong desire for the reformation of this and other abuses. To raise the moral tone of a whole nation is, however, no easy matter, and, meanwhile, the great majority of Russian officials continue to receive such paltry salaries as almost amount to a recognition of the indirect means by which their larger incomes are supplied. "If you commence a law-suit," says Mr.

Bremner, "however just your cause, it remains undecided for years, unless you bribe the judges again and again. If you want a government contract, the heads of the department must be propitiated with half of your calculated profits. If a situation is procured, it must be paid for. If you wish to have your passport, especially in any of the remote provinces, a thousand difficulties can be thrown in the way, till money removes them. Thus a foreigner, in a distant part of the empire, who wanted to leave the country, had waited upwards of a month without being able to obtain his papers from the governor's secretary, who always sent evasive answers. His patience being at length exhausted, he made a journey of a hundred miles, to wait on the governor himself. He was received with open arms, feasted, honoured as if he had been a bosom friend; but still his passport made no progress, until means were found to give the applicant a hint that he had forgot to accompany his letter with the customary bribe. The money was paid, the well-bred governor perhaps pocketing half of it; and the traveller got off without further delay. In all probability, money would have been equally powerful had he been a murderer, only that he would have had more to pay.

"The sums drawn in the shape of bribes by some people in office are quite enormous, not only in the capital, but in the provinces also. There is a town in the south of Russia where the director of police has an income of 80,000 roubles a-year (£3200),

though his regular salary is only 6000 roubles, or £240. All over the empire, the people holding such situations are notorious for their rapacity; but this personage enjoys peculiar opportunities for swelling his booty, having a monopoly for furnishing the prisons, lighting the streets, &c. Every inhabitant must make him presents, to avoid arbitrary interference with their affairs. But the largest item of all is paid by thieves, who thus purchase their escape from justice, in the face of complaints strongly and frequently urged by the most respectable residents. It is quite impossible to obtain redress for any grievance: better leave it untold, if you wish to avoid new loss.

“One of the anecdotes regarding this worthy illustrates so admirably the state of matters in Russia, that we give it as a specimen, from among many which could be repeated. Our informant, a merchant living at the place in question, had repeatedly missed money from his cash-box. Suspecting a man in his office, he resolved to watch him; and at last, after losing 800 roubles in the experiment, obtained sure proof that he was the thief. A police-officer being sent for, the person’s trunk was searched, and 650 of the roubles found in it; but neither restitution of the money nor punishment of the offender could ever be obtained. The officer, indeed, carried off the cash, and made an able report to his chief; but good care was taken that it should never find its way back again to the rightful owner, who was forced to

let the matter lie unagitated, knowing that to pursue it more would only be expending money in vain.

“Further, to show the purity of Russian justice, the same gentleman mentioned that a fellow once came to him with a forged paper, demanding money in the name of the police; it was paid without suspicion. But the visit being soon repeated, he suspected that there was something wrong, and put some questions to the messenger, who instantly took guilt to himself and fled. The printed paper and police stamps being both found to be forgeries, the offender was taken into custody, and the gentleman who had been the means of exposing him was thanked a hundred and a hundred times by the head of the department, who said that the man was an old officer, known for his tricks.

“Surely this delinquent was made an example of? By no means: in place of being punished, he is now again in the pay of the police. He had gained enough by his forgeries to be able to bribe the authorities to silence and connivance.”

Under such a system, which universally prevails, the boldest reformer might well abandon it in despair; and yet this is the sole check on the despotism of official subordinates, who can, at the mere instigation of personal enmity or self-interest, doom a rival to Siberia, and leave him languishing for years in its bleak fastnesses, unconscious even of the pretext on which he had been made the victim of such an abuse of power. In 1835, the total number of exiles in

Eastern and Western Siberia amounted in all to upwards of ninety-eight thousand, of whom more than five thousand had arrived within two years. It is not, of course, to be supposed that the whole of these were the innocent victims of despotic tyranny and official baseness. They included criminals of every grade, who had subjected themselves to legal condemnation for their crimes. But with these were indiscriminately mingled the poor serf, who had incurred his lord's displeasure, or balked his vicious projects; and the Russian or Polish noble, whose freedom of speech or patriotic fidelity had roused the wrath of the Imperial Autocrat. By such indiscriminate mingling of criminals and political victims, the sufferings of the latter must be greatly augmented; and that it is altogether indiscriminate, appears from the evidence of every trustworthy authority.

All who are condemned to exile, from whatever district of the vast empire they are despatched, proceed first to Moscow, where they are allowed a brief rest in the convict prison, and enjoy the sole opportunity of making an appeal to an official less hardened and relentless than the drivers of the miserable gangs of exiles. Mr. Bremner availed himself of this to seek some information on the painful subject of Siberian exile during his stay in Moscow. "Being anxious," says he, "to witness the ceremony of sending away the weekly band, which could not fail to give us some farther insight into the treatment of criminals in Russia, and enable us to form some opinion on the

charges of cruelty towards those condemned to Siberia, which have long been brought against the government, we applied for, and readily obtained, permission to be present on the Monday morning. The prison being situated at some distance from the city, and the departure always taking place at an early hour, we had to leave home by four o'clock in order to arrive in time. It was still dark, therefore, as we drove through the silent streets, and even when daylight came, both mist and rain combined against us. But on reaching the Sparrows' Hills (for so the place is called), the sky cleared, and afforded us a splendid view back on the city.

"Instead of a frowning prison, we were surprised to see merely a collection of log-huts, united, however, and surrounded by a wooden wall, strong and high. Indeed, we soon saw that the place, though of seemingly frail materials, is made fully as secure as stone and lime could be—numerous sentinels being posted round it, as well as at every gate. On being admitted, which was done with great caution and after a strict scrutiny, we found the first court occupied by a file of prisoners already chained for their dreary journey. Poor wretches! with those heavy fetters on their ankles, they were to walk every step of a journey which lasts only a few days less than six months! They were all, men and women, in the convicts' dress, a long loose kind of greatcoat, made of coarse lightish gray cloth. The men have one side of their head shaved; but, to distinguish soldiers more

readily from the others, they have the whole fore part of the head shaved, in place of the side.

"Leaving the court, we entered a large prison-room, most frightfully crowded with men, women, and children, who were to depart that morning. Dr. Hazy and another member of the committee were seated near the door, and by them stood the principal keeper, who had the long list of names in his hand, to each of which was added a brief notice of the crime and history of the individual. Always, as a new name was called, the person came forward from the crowd, and, before passing out to have his chains put on in the yard, was asked whether he had any application to make. Many of them had nothing to ask; others had petitions about wife or child, or relations, which were almost invariably granted. If the request be of a kind which cannot be fulfilled without a short delay, the visitors' powers go so far as to entitle them to defer a prisoner's departure for a week."

Dr. Hazy, here mentioned, like many others of the more important functionaries filling responsible offices in Russia, is a German, the government having resorted to foreigners in such cases, from the impossibility of finding natives who could be depended on. Mr. Bremner found him exercising his painful duty with the utmost benevolence and consideration, and striving, in every possible way, to alleviate the sufferings of the miserable exiles. The traveller from whom we quote, was inclined to view every-

thing with a favourable eye, and makes the most of every alleviating circumstance; but, with it all, it is miserable enough to make the heart sad in thinking of it. The gang of captives are unchained during their week's repose in the convict prison of Moscow, and he now witnessed the cruel operation of rivetting the fetters on each. These consist of a couple of heavy iron rings, one for each ankle, united by a chain composed of links each four or five inches in length; and, thus loaded, the wretched exile must plod his weary way, without ever being relieved of them, night or day, till he reach his journey's end. Besides these heavy fetters, they are linked, four and four together, by the wrists, and the serjeant, who is to take charge of the prisoners on their journey, watches the rivetting of each fetter with a scrutiny abundantly accounted for by the fact, that he has to answer for the safe keeping of his prisoners with his life.

In some cases of aggravated crime, or of desperate attempts at escape, even the poor boon of release from these galling fetters during the brief sojourn at Moscow is denied. One of these, witnessed by Mr. Bremner, was a murderer, who pleaded hard for release. "He had assassinated his wife, his dreadful crime being aggravated by circumstances of unusual atrocity. For this he had received sentence of death, as we should say in England, though such a term will no longer apply in Russia, where the punishment of death is now almost unknown. But, though his life had been spared, it was to be a life of

suffering. Besides being condemned to constant labour in the most deadly occupation within the bounds of Siberia, he had been punished with the knout, branded with hot irons on each cheek, and had the word 'murderer' stamped on his brow. These disfiguring stains added to the sinister expression of his countenance; and there were some beside him with looks fully as forbidding.

"Among the prisoners who most attracted our notice, was a black moustachoed, powerful-looking man, still young. His manly and handsome though fierce countenance, would have excited interest, even if seen in company of a very different stamp; but he stood alone, and, to our surprise, seemed to be shunned by his companions. Think who he was—the executioner of Moscow, now loaded with chains and on his way to Siberia! And for what? The poor wretch's crime showed him to have still something good about him, notwithstanding his terrible office. It is the law that, when this situation becomes vacant, any one condemned to Siberia may have his sentence commuted, provided he accept the unenviable post. He is still a prisoner, but is allowed to live by himself, and to go about free within the walls of the prison. Some time before, this man had accepted the office, but was soon so disgusted with the bloody task, that he made his escape; was caught again, and now irrevocably banished. From having already shown such dexterity in escaping, the keeper was very reluctant to relieve him of his chains; but

he pleaded hard, and, through our party, was successful. He bowed to us in gratitude, and hastened back from the block again to thank us.

“ Two of the convicts had been condemned for returning from Siberia. They were detected on reaching their native districts. One of them was so old, that it was impossible he could stand this second journey; yet, old as he was, he could not forget his home: he had trudged through a thousand dangers, and across a thousand wastes, to see it but once ere he died: all this, too, with the certainty that he would be discovered and sent back, under worse circumstances than before, besides receiving severe corporal punishment.

“ We were much moved to find a Polish nobleman in one of the rooms, undistinguished from the lowest thieves and horse-stealers. His pale and wasted appearance told how much his degradation was preying upon him. Conversation with him was, of course, not permitted; but we were told that he had been guilty of falsifying some government papers. The sight of this unhappy individual induced us to try whether we could obtain information about the way in which prisoners of rank are treated; but we learnt little on this unwelcome subject. It was admitted, however, that they are compelled to march the whole way on foot, the same as the others, and along with the others; this, too, whatever their offence may have been: whether the charge be of a political or of a criminal nature, no distinction is made. The only

indulgence we could hear of—and even of this we are doubtful—is, that they are lodged at night in a less crowded place, and, though they walk with the rest, are not chained. To this latter part of a nobleman's indulgences, however, we accidentally discovered an exception, in the very case of the individual now mentioned. Forgetting what we had just been told about no nobleman being fettered, one of us asked whether he had chains on like the rest. 'O no,' at once answered the doctor; but, shortly after, the poor man happened to move aside his long prison-coat, when it was seen that he was loaded like those we had left. The doctor, though indignant at the abuse, was yet overjoyed at the discovery, as it gave him an opportunity of ordering that the chains should instantly be removed, having been imposed in direct violation of the law. It is highly probable that, whatever the rules may be on this subject, the keepers take the law in their own hands when once out on the march; for, unless here, there is no place where a prisoner's voice is heard—there is none to take the smallest interest in them; in fact, they are not heard of more than if dead."

It is difficult to suppose that the doctor's indignation was not assumed, owing to the presence of the English traveller; for, compelled, as such are, to march indiscriminately with the rest of the gang, on foot, for a journey extending over a period of half a year, the guards, whose responsibility for their safe keeping must be greatly increased rather than diminished

in the case of nobles and prisoners of state, are little likely to dispense with the security which fetters afford. The traveller and his companions found, indeed, that there were various prisoners, and especially some of distinction, concerning whom the doctor was very unwilling to communicate any information, and the keeper anxiously endeavoured even to prevent them from seeing such; and he adds: "Russia is never without her political prisoners. We have not the least doubt that, though not pointed out to us, there were several of them in the train we saw sent away. We venture to assert that, at this very hour, there are hundreds marching the same blood-stained path, and receiving the same unrelenting usage." What this usage is likely to be, may be inferred even from what Mr. Bremner witnessed, when the gang that he had seen fettered were led forth to resume their melancholy journey. This protracted over six months, with ankles and wrists loaded with irons, that are never once removed, can need no additional evils to augment its horrors: "All being now ready, the gates were thrown open, outside of which the exiles, of whom there must have been more than one hundred, were handed over to a strong guard on foot, belonging to a corps employed, we believe, exclusively in this duty, all wearing faded blue uniforms. Every man loaded his gun in the presence of the prisoners. There was a mounted escort with long spears; the commander of which instantly began to use the poor creatures very roughly,

riding fiercely about amongst them, striking right and left with his strong whip, without the smallest reason for doing so, just as a brutal drover might do amongst cattle. A little confusion prevailed for a time, but soon all was in order, and they moved slowly away—the *men* in a band by themselves; after which followed the carts with their wives, their children, and their little bundles of clothes; and last came the *female convicts*, marching in a band by themselves, strongly guarded, but not chained.

“When they had got to some distance, it was terrible to hear the slow, regular clank of their chains, as they crept across the turf among the small clumps of fir. They gave us a long look as we turned away—could they be blamed if it was one of envy?”

A few days afterwards, the travellers came by chance on the same gang, pursuing their melancholy way; and the picture they presented was nearly as sad a one as the imagination could recall: “When we started in the morning,” says Mr. Bremner, “the first sight that struck us was a melancholy one—the poor convicts whom we had seen setting out a few days before on their way to Siberia. They do not march in a regular column like soldiers, but are spread into a large straggling band. They eyed us so wistfully, that we could not help commiserating them the more. Most of them might well say—

‘ Every tedious stride I make
Will but remind me, what a deal of world
I wander from—the jewels that I love!’

“They are toiling on, with no prospect of ever again revisiting the land of their affection. We passed several more of these bands within the next few days. The houses in which they spend the night are wretched hovels, generally at the outskirts of a town or village. When the band is on march, men are constantly riding about amongst them, to see that no attempt at escape is going on, and making the whip play upon their shoulders with the most wanton brutality. The prisoners also know that, for the smallest breach of rules, the loaded gun is at the shoulder in a moment, or, what they dread even more, that there is a knout at the next sleeping-place.”

The fate of these exiles differs in degree after their arrival at their final destination. But of nearly all of them it may be said, that they enter a new world. The past is as utterly dead to them as if they had journeyed through the grave and gate of death on their weary way. They are hopelessly cut off from all intercourse with friends, kindred, or that outer world in which they lived before; and if, like the lost spirits witnessed in Dante's vision, they do not abandon all hope, it can only be by beginning life anew, as the exile-colonists of the remote region to which they have been sent. This is open to many of inferior birth, who are settled on allotments which they cultivate, and are looked upon, in some degree, as colonists. With political exiles and prisoners of rank, however, it is otherwise; and the fate of those condemned to the highest degree of punishment is

one of almost unmitigated misery. "Nothing can be more wretched than their condition. From the first hour after their arrival, they are engaged in the most laborious and unwholesome toils—in the freezing depths of the mine, or amid the suffocating vapours of the places where unhealthy chemical processes are carried on—shut up from the light of day, the breath of heaven, the sympathy of their kind. They not only lose goods and rank, but, by a refinement in cruelty, they lose their very names—that which marked them to be Christians, and by which they were known among men, is taken away. Christian and family appellations are alike obliterated, and a *number* given in their stead, by which they are always called by the driver when he has occasion to address them."

Such, then, is Siberia, in so far as we can judge of it from the reports of those who have sought to glean some information concerning it during that dread "middle passage," in which so many a brave heart must have perished, borne down and crushed under the terrible load of misery with which Russia visits the political offender, or the patriotic alien, who has the courage to dream of liberty in her vast prison-house.

Part II.—The Poles and Cossacks.

CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT POLAND.

WITH a singular contrast of emotion and action, the sympathies of the free nations of Europe have seemed, during the present century, to concentrate on Poland the full manifestation of coincident feeling; and yet the great powers of Europe have concurred in blotting her from the nations. Prudence, necessity, or the shackles of interested relations with the despotic powers of the continent, have kept England inactive; while France, with larger professions, has failed to assert her power to interfere. Yet Poland has not fallen without noble and eloquent protests against the deed, from friends of liberty, who have shown themselves no less willing to act than to speak on her behalf, though in vain. But, among all who have advocated the cause of oppressed and enslaved Poland, none more faithfully or more eloquently protested on her behalf than the Poet of Hope, Thomas Campbell. Nor was it with him the mere effusion of poetic sympathy. He was no less ready with his purse than

with his pen. To the last, the exiles of Poland looked to him for countenance and relief, and, when he was laid to rest, amid his illustrious predecessors and compeers, in "The Poet's Corner" of Westminster Abbey, a guard of Polish nobles asked and obtained permission to escort his remains to that noble mausoleum. No poet, in our own day, has been borne to the grave and laid to rest with more hearty and honourable marks of a just appreciation of his genius, and deep regret for his loss; but, among all these, none was more touching than the act of one of his Polish escort, who, as the officiating priest, read the words of the solemn burial service: which committed his mortal remains to the tomb, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," sprinkled over his coffin the cherished earth which the exile had himself brought from Poland—a last memorial of his native soil.

Such honours as Poland could pay, in her widowhood, to the poet of Hope, were, indeed, well merited; for his devotion to her cause was altogether remarkable. In forwarding the benevolent schemes for aiding the suffering Polish refugees, and other exiles, in the cause of continental liberty, his exertions were constant and unwearied to the last. He contributed, on one occasion, £100 to the hospital at Warsaw; and nearly at the same time secured an equal sum for the Polish exiles, partly by his personal appeals to his friends, and partly as the direct profits of his own publications set apart for this pious object. He

was abundantly rewarded, according to his own generous desires, by the gratitude of the whole Polish nation, who looked up to him through life as their friend and champion, and at his death were among the truest of his mourners. Dr. Madden, an intimate friend of the poet, has thus recorded his own recollections of the earnest manifestations of that sympathy with suffering Poland which found expression in his first great poem, and continued one of the strongest and most enduring passions of his heart through life: "Campbell's interest in the cause of Poland is well known. His devotion to it was a passion, that had all the fervour of patriotism, the purity of philanthropy, the fidelity of a genuine love of liberty. I was with him on the day he received an account of the fall of Warsaw. Never in my life did I see a man so stricken with profound sorrow! He looked utterly woe-begone; his features were haggard, his eyes sunken, his lips pale, his colour almost yellow. I feared that, if this prostration of all energy of mind and body continued, his life or his reason must have sunk under the blow. On this occasion, every kindness and attention were shown to him. He spent much of his time in my house, and Mrs. Madden's care and considerate regards for an honoured guest were acceptable and useful to him.

"In fits of abstraction and absence of mind, he used frequently to start from reveries of long continuance, with such exclamations as 'Poor Poland!'—'Warsaw is taken!'—'Order reigns at Warsaw!'—

‘The miscreant Autocrat!’—‘The murderer of this brave people!’—‘The cause of Poland is lost for ever!’

“If I had been told that any man could have been similarly affected by the news of any political event or catastrophe, I could not have believed it. It was not regret, deep concern, or mere melancholy, at tidings of a distressing public nature, but real heartfelt sorrow, stupifying grief, an astounding trouble of mind for the loss of a beloved object, in which all his hopes centred. That beloved object was Poland. It was his idol. He wrote for it; he worked for it; he sold his literary labour for it; he used his influence with all persons of eminence in political life, of his acquaintance, in favour of it; and, when it was lost, in favour of those brave defenders of it who had survived its fall. He threw himself, heart and soul, into the cause—he identified all his feelings, nay, his very being, with it.”

How much additional interest does this anecdote of the poet confer on the well-known passages in his noble poem, dedicated to the memory of Poland and her wrongs:—

Oh! sacred Truth! thy triumph ceased a while,
And Hope, thy sister, ceased with thee to smile,
When leagued Oppression poured to Northern wars
Her whiskered pandoors and her fierce hussars,
Waved her dread standard to the breeze of morn,
Pealed her loud drum, and twanged her trumpet horn;
Tumultuous horror brooded o'er her van,
Presaging wrath to Poland—and to man!

Warsaw's last Champion, from her height surveyed,
Wide o'er the fields, a waste of ruin laid,—
Oh! Heaven! he cried, my bleeding country save!
Is there no hand on high to shield the brave?—
Yet, though destruction sweep these lovely plains,
Rise, fellow-men! our country yet remains!
By that dread name, we wave the sword on high,
And swear for her to live!—with her to die!

He said, and on the rampart-heights arrayed
His trusty warriors, few, but undismayed;
Firm-paced and slow, a horrid front they form,
Still as the breeze, but dreadful as the storm;
Low, murmuring sounds along their banners fly,
Revenge, or death,—the watchword and reply!
Then pealed the notes, omnipotent to charm,
And the loud tocsin tolled their last alarm!

In vain, alas! in vain, ye gallant few!
From rank to rank your volleyed thunder flew:—
Oh! bloodiest picture in the book of Time,
Sarmatia fell, unwept, without a crime;
Found not a generous friend, a pitying foe,
Strength in her arms, nor mercy in her woe!
Dropped from her nerveless grasp the shattered spear,
Closed her bright eye, and curbed her high career;
Hope, for a season, bade the world farewell,
And freedom shrieked—as KOSCIUSKO fell!

The sun went down, nor ceased the carnage there,
Tumultuous murder shook the midnight air—
On Prague's proud arch the fires of ruin glow,
His blood-dyed waters murmuring far below;—
The storm prevails, the rampart yields a way,
Bursts the wild cry of horror and dismay!—
Hark! as the smouldering piles with thunder fall,
A thousand shrieks for hopeless mercy call!
Earth shook—red meteors flashed along the sky,
And conscious Nature shuddered at the cry!

Departed spirits of the mighty dead!
Ye that at Marathon and Leuctra bled!
Friends of the world! restore your swords to man,
Fight in his sacred cause and lead the van!
Yet for Sarmatia's tears of blood atone,
And make her arm puissant as your own!—
Oh! once again to Freedom's cause return
The patriot TELL—the BRUCE of BANNOCKBURN!

The ancient country of the Poles, lying mainly between the Vistula and the Volga, is almost an uninterrupted level. The authentic history of Poland begins with a struggle between the Polish *voyvodes*, or barons, and their despotic chief, or sovereign, named Popiel, in the ninth century. History, down to a considerably later period, is mythic or fabulous in most countries of Europe, and that of Poland is no exception.

The following is the legend by which, in the figurative form of an unlettered people, the record of the old popular triumph over tyranny has been preserved. Popiel, nursed from infancy under the fostering care of uncles, whose self-denying fidelity forms, in the popular legend, a fitting set-off to the ingratitude and perfidy of their ward, became, as he grew to manhood, a monster of vice. On reaching maturity, his passions burst forth with unrestrained fury: no woman was safe from his violence, no man from his revenge. Debauchery, extortion, and cruelty of every kind, at length wore out the patience of his people, and turned even his indignant uncles into the enemies of their foster-child. A formidable con-

federacy was formed against him, headed by his uncles. "To dissolve this, and, at the same time, to gratify his revenge, he was stimulated alike by his own malignity and by the counsels of his wife. He feigned sickness, sent for his uncles, as if to make his peace with them, and poisoned them in the wine which was produced for their entertainment. He even carried his wickedness so far as to refuse the rites of sepulture to his victims. But, say the chroniclers, divine justice prepared a fit punishment for this Sardanapalus and Jezebel. From the unburied corpses sprung a countless multitude of rats, of an enormous size, which immediately filled the palace, and sought out the guilty pair and their two children. In vain were great numbers destroyed; greater swarms advanced. In vain did the ducal family enclose themselves within a circle of fire; the boundary was soon passed by the ferocious animals, which, with unrelenting constancy, aimed at them, and them alone. They fled to another element, which availed them as little. The rats followed them to a neighbouring lake, plunged into the water, and fixed their teeth in the sides of the vessel, in which they would soon have gnawed holes sufficient to let in the water and sink it, had not Popiel commanded the sailors to land him on an island near at hand. In vain; his inveterate enemies were on shore as soon as he. His attendants now recognised the finger of Heaven, and left him to his fate. Accompanied by his wife and children, he now fled to a neighbour-

ing tower; he ascended the highest pinnacle: still they followed; neither doors nor bars could resist them. His two sons were first devoured, then the duchess, then himself, and so completely, that not a bone remained."

The story of the choice of Popiel's successor is clothed, in like manner, in the garb of legendary fable. Freed by such means from the oppressions of a despot, the Poles luxuriated for a time in the sweets of unrestrained liberty; but this, as usual, degenerated to license, and it was once more found necessary to elect a chief magistrate. The sons of the murdered uncles survived. These and other candidates appeared as claimants for the sovereignty; rival parties disputed, quarrelled, and at length flew to arms. Then it was that, as the chroniclers relate, Heaven once more interposed, and guided the people in the choice of a ruler.

"There dwelt in Cracow a poor but virtuous artisan, named Piast, a son of Kossisco, a citizen of Kruswitz, which was then the Polish capital. So poor was Piast, that his wants were but scantily eked out with the help of a small piece of ground which he cultivated with his own hands; yet so virtuous was he, that the blessings of thousands accompanied his steps. He had a wife and a son, both worthy of him. He lived contented in his poverty, which he had no wish to remove, since he had wisdom enough to perceive that the state most exempt from artificial wants is the most favourable to virtue, and consequently to

happiness. When the time arrived that his son should be first shorn of his locks of hair, and receive a name—a custom of great antiquity among the pagan Slavi—he invited, as was usual on such occasions, his neighbours to the ceremony. On the day appointed, two strangers arrived with the rest, and being hospitably received by him, they promised him that he should be king. Piast laid before his guests all he could furnish for their entertainment: that all was little; but he hoped the spirit with which it was offered would compensate for the lack of good cheer. They fell to the scanty stock of viands and meal, when, lo! a miracle! both were multiplied prodigiously! the more they ate and drank, the more the tables groaned under the weight of the viands! The portent was spread abroad with rapidity. Numbers daily flocked to the peasant's house to share his hospitality, and to witness the miraculous increase of his provisions."

Like Abraham of old, and his nephew Lot, Piast was entertaining angels unawares. Like the poor widow of Samaria, his stock of provisions had been reduced to his last cruse; but even this, which was a small cask of wine, he had not hesitated to produce for the refreshment of his stranger guests. At this time, a dreadful famine broke out, not improbably the result of discord and anarchy consequent on the disputed succession to the sovereignty. Death, in every horrid form, was carrying on its ravages among the people; but whoever applied to Piast, received

ungrudgingly of the contents of his miraculous cask, and lived. Their misery had been increased by the influx of multitudes, called thither to join in the popular election of a king. As these partook of the miraculous bounty of the poor wheelwright, they cried out, "Who so fit to reign over us! The gods have chosen him to be the father of his nation." The popular clamour was responded to by the *voyvodes*, or barons, and Piast, taken from his carpenter's bench, was set among princes, as the father of a new line of kings. Such is the Polish legend, which probably preserves the poetic version of a contested election, settled at the last by the jealous opponents fixing on some obscure object of popular favour, rather than allow of a rival gaining the victory.

Whatever truths mingle in these beginnings of recorded history, there is no doubt that in early times Poland was governed by hereditary sovereigns. It is only through such dim mists of fable and legend that early history is traceable, nor are such features in any way peculiar to Poland. A monkish legend tells of the miraculous cure of Mieczylas I., who was born blind, but had his sight restored to him by the interposition of certain Roman missionaries, and, by this means, the way was paved for the introduction of Christianity, under his countenance, in the latter end of the tenth century; and this is followed by legends such as are common in all the early writings of monkish chroniclers. Amid these, however, we catch occasional glimpses of the true character of the

people. Living, as they did, on a vast plain, they appear to have been a race of mounted nomades, not unlike the Cossacks of later times; and the possession of one or more horses seems to have constituted almost the only real distinction among the people.

The regal history is a very sad one. It seems little better than an alternation of haughty tyrants and contemptible voluptuaries; while, more than once, the king was, strangely enough, brought from the cloister to the throne. Such was the case with two of the Casimirs. Casimir I., grandson of Boleslas, was a youth when he succeeded to the throne, and the Poles, fearing that he would follow the bad example of his father—a debauched voluptuary—would not allow him to enjoy uncontrolled regal authority, but nominated Rixa, his mother, regent. “She, however, disappointed the expectations of her subjects; imposing enormous taxes, and advancing Germans to the most important offices: in consequence of which she was obliged to fly from the kingdom, taking the precaution, however, to carry off the regal treasure. Her son, Casimir, was also obliged to fly from the vengeance of the *voyvodes*.

“The throne being thus left vacant, a general scene of Saturnalia ensued in Poland. The serfs, imitating the example of their masters, rose in a body, and retaliated the cruelties which they had so long suffered. The reaction was equal to the pressure, and the whole system of servitude was at an end. The Bible, from which the corrupt, time-

serving priest took his text, in passive obedience to the most severe and tyrannical master, seemed to the poor peasant only to add another link to the already heavy chain of bondage; the Church of God appeared but another prison-house; and the name of the Most High that of a strange god, who had come among them as a destroyer. Bibles, churches, monks, and masters, were made one great sacrifice of atonement to the enraged serfs, on the idolatrous altars of their fathers. The *lex talionis*, that law which has always been so deeply engraved on the human heart by the finger of revenge, was the only code of these infuriate bodies. Their masters had taught them to plunder, tyrannize, and murder, and their last lesson was to rebel.

“ But an invasion of their country by the Bohemians, who took advantage of the opportunity, now turned the points of the Polish swords from each other’s bosoms. These marauders laid waste all the west of the kingdom; and the Russians, adding to the slaughter, ravaged the east. The measure of the people’s calamities seemed now full. The rebellious members of the political body again assumed their functions; the serf bowed his neck to the yoke, and the Poles supplicated the ministers of that very religion they had just abjured, for aid; they rebuilt the churches, which were almost yet smoking; sent an embassy to the Pope, for absolution, and a curse upon their enemies; and lastly, invited back the prince Casimir, whom they had just banished, to resume the sceptre.

“Casimir, however, was not to be found; and all their search seemed fruitless. Messenger after messenger returned without tidings, and hope after hope was frustrated. At length they remembered that his mother, Rixa, who had taken refuge in Germany, would most probably be acquainted with the retreat of her son; and after some difficulty, they succeeded in obtaining from her the wished-for intelligence. Five years had elapsed since his flight, when, retiring to France, he had become a student at the university of Paris: he then went to Italy, where the wandering outcast king entered a monastery, ‘to beg for a piece of bread,’ and assumed the religious habit. After this, he retraced his steps to France, and became an inmate of the abbey of Cluny, in which seclusion he was hidden while the Poles were so earnestly seeking him. But although found, another apparently insurmountable obstacle stood in his road to the throne: his religious vow prohibited him from engaging in secular matters. The Pope, however, had the power to grant a dispensation of this tie, which he at length consented to do, on condition that they should pay Peter’s pence, and that the whole nation should shave their heads, and wear, like other Catholic professors, white surplices on the days of festival. The Poles still continue to wear their heads shaved, except a small portion on the crown, though it proceeds, we believe, from a very different reason to that assigned.*

* The practice of shaving the head is of much more ancient date than even the Polish nation. It was a remarkable custom

“Casimir soon re-established peace in Poland, and ensured himself from aggression on the Russian frontier, by marrying Mary, the sister of the Russ duke. Religion also shared his attention with polity; and in gratitude to the monks of Cluny, who had afforded him an asylum when his own subjects had turned him out of the palace of his fathers, he invited many of them into Poland, and fixed them in the abbey of Tynieć, near Cracow.”

A story, belonging to a later reign, furnishes a pleasant example of moderation and self-denial, such as is unhappily without a parallel in the history of the kingdom or republic of Poland. “On the death of Wladislas, his son, Boleslas III., succeeded to the throne in 1103. The fond but imprudent father had made a division of the Polish territory between his children; but the collisions which naturally ensued furnished Boleslas with an opportunity of uniting the whole of his brothers’ patrimonies with his own. No sooner had he thus consolidated the strength of Poland, than he found an occasion to exert it. The King of Hungary was now involved in a war with Henry V., Emperor of Germany; and, having been instrumental in establishing Boleslas on his throne, the Polish duke was bound to assist him. He therefore made a diversion of the Emperor’s troops on the side of Bohemia, under the pretext of maintaining the

among the ancient Poles, to shave the heads of the males when they arrived at the age of manhood, which was a sign of their adoption as sons and heirs.

right of one of the contending candidates for the Bohemian crown, who had taken refuge with him. Henry was compelled to desist from the expedition against Hungary, to meet this new enemy. The German troops overran Silesia, which was then dependent on the Polish government, and penetrated as far as Glogau, a small town on the Oder. This place was at that time but feebly garrisoned; notwithstanding, the citizens gave the Emperor a warm reception. They were at length obliged to make overtures, and agreed to surrender in six days, unless they received succour.

“No aid having arrived, the Emperor advanced to take possession of the town, but was unexpectedly saluted with a discharge of arrows and javelins. The citizens had received notice from Boleslas, that he could not arrive within the six days, but would not be long after; so that, availing themselves of the laxity with which treaties were kept in that age of savage warfare, they sacrificed their word to their liberty, and still held out. So obstinate was their resistance, that the Germans were obliged to retire, and besieged Breslau, the capital of Silesia, on the Oder, and sixty-seven miles to the south-east of Glogau. The German historians say that a battle ensued here between Henry and Boleslas, in which the latter had so much the worst, that he sent an ambassador to the Emperor with overtures of peace. The name of this ambassador was Scrobilus. Henry is said to have received him very haughtily, and

to have given him to understand that the Poles must not expect peace from him, unless they submitted to his conditions and became tributary. At the same time, runs the story, he led him to his treasury, to exhibit his wealth; and, pointing to the gold, told him there were the weapons with which he would reduce the Poles to subjection. To this the ambassador made no answer, but taking a ring from his finger, threw it into the heap, saying with a smile, 'Here is something to augment the store.' Henry is said to have answered with equal coolness, shutting the coffer, *Habdank*, 'I thank you!' 'Happy,' remarks a modern historian, 'would this state have been, if, surrounded by neighbours who think as this Emperor, it had preserved in our days that noble disinterestedness and contempt for gold, which would have ensured it its independence.' A battle ensued, in which the Germans were completely routed, and the Emperor then gladly accepted the offer of peace, which was afterwards strongly cemented by the marriage of Boleslas with Henry's sister."

Yet Poland has her Alfreds and Edwards—rare exceptions of moderation and justice—among her kingly chronicles. Foremost among these is Casimir II., surnamed *The Just*. The following anecdote will supply an admirable illustration of the mildness and benevolence of this amiable prince: "He was one day at play, and won all the money of one of his nobility, who, incensed at his ill fortune, suddenly struck the prince a blow on the ear, in the heat of

his uncontrolled passion. He fled immediately from justice; but, being pursued and overtaken, was condemned to lose his head. The generous Casimir determined otherwise. 'I am not surprised,' said he, 'at the gentleman's conduct; for not having it in his power to revenge himself on fortune, no wonder he should attack her favourite in me.' After these generous words, he revoked the sentence, returned the nobleman his money, and declared that he alone was faulty, as he encouraged, by his example, a pernicious practice that might terminate in the ruin of hundreds of the people."

The vices as well as the virtues of the sovereigns of Poland, were such as they shared with those of other kingdoms; but on the death of Sigismund, the last king of the house of Jagellon, without a male line, Poland became that anomaly, an elective monarchy, a republic without its advantages, and a sovereignty without its securities and ties. "Under the dynasty of the Jagellons," says Fletcher, "which lasted one hundred and eighty-six years, Poland had attained its perfect growth and dimensions, and its constitution had also arrived at equal maturity. Jewel after jewel has since been stolen from the crown, till it has become but a simple badge of official distinction. There being no third order whom the kings could raise up against the nobles, which would have rendered the monarchy limited, but shielded it from total subjection to the aristocracy, there was no alternative but to make the government a perfect despo-

tism, as in Russia, to preserve the regal authority. This was attempted in after years, but the kings who undertook it had not sufficient genius or perseverance, and the aristocracy had attained too great an ascendancy by the diet and confederation. Besides, the chief military forces of the kingdom were not composed of a distinct order, who might be won over to the regal side, but of the nobility and their retinues; nor had the king that powerful engine, wealth, in his power, all the revenue being at the disposal of the diet, which was composed of the aristocracy. Under these circumstances, the king could only be 'a judge,' as one of the future monarchs expressed himself; and the state that anomaly, a republic of aristocrats."

In the diet which was held in 1573, the crown was declared thenceforth elective, the nobles were to meet on a plain near Warsaw, to make their choice of a sovereign, and the diet was to assemble every two years, and, in reality, to exercise all real power. From this, however, and indeed from nearly all the rights of freemen, the people were excluded, and hence Poland became a prey to internal faction and external interference, till at length she fell a prey to her Muscovite rival. The elements of internal division and strife first attract our notice in relation to the rival interests of the nobles and people, in the struggle by which the Cossacks were armed as the perpetual foes of their Polish tyrants and oppressors.

CHAPTER II.

THE COSSACKS.

THE whole aspect of Russia presents to the foreign traveller a mingling of the imitation of Europe's highest civilization along with much of its most unsophisticated barbarism. This has been already made apparent in the various aspects of the country and its institutions at which we have glanced in former chapters; but in no case is it more manifest than in that singular branch of its standing army, the marauding Cossacks. Even this, however, is undergoing a change; and these wild mounted horsemen, fresh from their native haunts on the Russian steppes, are being transformed into drilled and orderly troops, like the ordinary light cavalry of the standing armies of modern Europe. It has escaped the knowledge of many of the modern admirers of Poland, how close a relation once subsisted between her and these modern foes.

The name of the celebrated body of Russian light cavalry is sufficiently characteristic of them, according to the experience of all who have been brought into conflict with these military marauders. The word cossack is simply the Turkish *kuzzak*, a robber; their Turkish neighbours having, for very sufficient reasons doubtless, applied the name to the predatory tribes inhabiting the banks of the Don. This epithet is of

no modern origin, for the marauding habits from whence it originated can be traced back to an early date, and for centuries they were the terror of all the surrounding countries within the range of their forays. It is curious, while reflecting on their modern and more familiar history, to note that their origin was chiefly Slavonic; and that, in so far as they are related by consanguinity to any single nation, it is to the Poles, against whom they have been employed by Russia in the execution of every cruel and despotic inroad.

It is in the early history of Poland that we obtain the first distinct notices of the Cossacks. In 1576, Stephen Batory, Duke of Transylvania, was elected King of Poland, and he soon proved himself worthy to be chosen as the leader and sovereign of a warlike people. He is justly regarded as one of the greatest and best monarchs of Poland. He established his claims to the throne by successive victories, which were due, to a great extent, to his own skill, moderation, and indomitable courage. Nor was the wisdom with which he turned his victories to account less remarkable than his military talent. Even in apparent concessions he contrived to secure advantageous results to the republic. "But," says one of the historians of Poland, "from his wise policy with respect to the Cossacks, Batory derived more glory than from all his victories. This singular people were originally deserters from the armies maintained by the republic, near the banks of the Borysthènes,

to arrest the incursions of the Tartars. The almost inaccessible isles of that river, and the vast steppes of the Ukraine, served for secure places of retreat. As their numbers increased by propagation and desertion—and they opened their arms to the people of every nation who arrived among them—they made frequent predatory incursions into the Ottoman territories; they sometimes ventured as far as the suburbs of Constantinople, and in rude boats, consisting merely of trees hollowed out, they did not hesitate to trust themselves on the Black Sea, every shore of which they visited and ravaged. Their soil—the richest in corn of any in Europe—required little cultivation, and they were consequently at liberty to pass most of their time in plunder, piracy, or open war.

“As they were Christians in their origin, they preserved a sort of Christianity among themselves, but so mingled, in time, with idolatrous and Mohammedan notions, that its fair characters were almost lost. The Polish gentleman, whom infamy had branded or justice threatened; the Polish serf, who fled from the iron despotism of a haughty, rapacious master; the Greek schismatic, the persecuted Lutheran, either imperfectly remembered or but negligently practised the rites of their respective churches: hence a sort of mongrel worship prevailed, of which the leading features more resembled the Eastern than the Western Church. But they did not much trouble themselves with either the doctrines or the duties of Christianity. Robbers by profession, and cruel by habit, they were

the terror of surrounding countries. Strong, hardy, of indomitable courage, fond of war even more for the dangers which attended it than for the plunder it procured them, their alliance was eagerly sought by Lithuanians, Poles, Muscovites, Tartars, and Turks. To the former people, as the stock whence the majority were derived, they long bore sentiments of affection; indeed, they acknowledged themselves vassals of the republic, though their chief obedience was due to their own grand hetman. Ostafi Daskiewitz, a peasant on the estates of a Lithuanian noble (many nobles both of the crown and the grand duchy had extensive estates in the Ukraine), was the first who divided them into regiments and taught them discipline. As a reward for his exertions, he was presented by Sigismund I., who appeared sensible of the advantages which these formidable warriors might procure for the kingdom, with the starosty of Tserkassy, and the jurisdiction of some fortresses near the Borysthenes. Had the advice of this simple but strong-minded man been taken, Poland would have been effectually screened against the incursions of the Tartars. He counselled Sigismund to maintain ten thousand armed men on the banks of the river, who, in their rude rafts, could easily prevent the enemy from crossing: a few troops of horse might forage for this stationary little army. A still more important suggestion was to build forts and little towers on the islets of that magnificent stream. What Sigismund had not the spirit, perhaps not the means, to accomplish, Batory

night and should have effected. The latter monarch, however, did much towards so desirable an end. He diligently cultivated the affection of the Cossacks; and they are among the most grateful of men. He gave them the city of Trychtymirow, which became their chief magazine and the residence of their grand hetman: he introduced among them the useful arts of life, and greatly improved their discipline: he formed them into six regiments, each consisting of one thousand men (ten companies of one hundred), and commanded by a hetman, or chief. Each grand hetman, whom the whole force obeyed, received his investiture at the hands of the king: the symbols were an ensign, a horse tail (*bonzuk*), a baton resembling a club, and a looking-glass. The Cossacks being thus attached by new ties—those of gratitude and allegiance—to the republic, were well disposed to fulfil the purpose assigned them. Their fidelity was striking; until, from friends, they were transformed into enemies by the most intolerable wrongs.”

It might, however, be said of them, that they were frequently little less troublesome as friends than as enemies. In 1593, for example, Sigismund III. was involved in a war with the Tartars, solely in consequence of the indignation which the incursions and forays of the Cossacks had excited; and the khan appeared at the head of seventy thousand Tartar warriors, whose opportune defeat alone prevented their being followed by a Turkish invasion.

We now regard with a just interest and sympathy

the sufferings of the expatriated Poles. It can never be forgotten, however, in the history of Poland, that all its struggles have been those of a dominant and haughty oligarchy, who were generally as little disposed to brook the freedom of their sovereign as of the people. By the cruel and overbearing policy of the nobles, the Cossacks were entirely alienated from Poland, and converted into its most implacable enemies. Throughout the whole of Poland, the peasantry, including the great mass of the people, were mere serfs, such as those of Russia now are. From time to time, the rapacious nobles obtained grants of lands in the Ukraine, and forthwith claimed a right to exercise the same despotic sway over the Cossack peasantry as they were accustomed to do over their own. The evils of such a system were still further aggravated by their rights being entirely delegated to stewards, who, if they raised a sufficient revenue for the absentee proprietor, might do in all other respects as they pleased. The odious and hateful office of steward, burdened with these unpopular duties, soon fell entirely into the hands of Jews. It was their custom generally to advance money on the anticipated produce of the soil; and, thus they had all the stimulus which the usurious greed of gain could supply to tempt them to wring from the miserable cultivators of the soil the utmost they could be forced to yield. The losses, moreover, incident to a bad harvest, so far from inducing such forbearance as the sympathy of a resident landlord will suggest, only

existed the cupidity of these avaricious usurers, who were little likely to show any indulgence in the collection of revenues already farmed and paid for. The Cossacks, however, were as little likely to submit patiently to such extortions. They appealed to Sigismund III., but he was powerless against the nobles. They then demanded not only the entire abolition of their grievances, but that their chiefs should have a seat in the diet, and their people be held free. But the diet of Polish nobles, however sensitive at all times about any encroachment on their own rights, would allow no liberty to the people. The remonstrances, appeals, and prayers for justice, were received with equal contempt. Insult was added to wrong, and fresh imposts aggravated the indignant wrath of the free Cossacks.

CHAPTER III.

BOGDAN CHMIELNISKI, THE COSSACK CHIEF.

ULADISLAS VII., the successor of Sigismund, was equally willing and equally powerless to effect any amelioration of the Cossacks' grievances; and, on a deputation of these hardy borderers pressing on his notice their unredressed grievances, he is said to have impatiently exclaimed to them, "Have you no swords?" These wild borderers had little need of any such appeal. When they found that their

demands for justice were made in vain, they had speedy recourse to their lances and sabres; and though their efforts were attended with variable fortunes, the revenues and exactions of their oppressors were at an end. In one of their first determined movements, they took and destroyed the fortress of Kudak, which had been erected by their Polish masters to overawe them. Potocki, the grand hetman of the crown, on learning of their movements, had hastened to muster an adequate force to oppose them, and the Cossack besiegers of Kudak were surprised by him, and totally routed.

In the kind of guerilla warfare for which all border tribes are famed, a defeat exercises a much less important influence than on disciplined and organized forces, with whom the prestige of early success has no slight bearing on the results of a campaign. The history of the Scottish borders sufficiently illustrates this. It might literally be said of the Scottish borderers that they were constantly defeated, yet always successful. Beyond them lay a more populous and powerful, but also a richer country; defeated at one point, they only hastened, with an ardour increased by exasperation, to make an inroad on another and less guarded point, and never failed to retaliate on their opponents, and to return with a richer booty than all they had to lose. But, added to the marauding habits of a border race, there were added, in the struggle between the Poles and Cossacks, all the miseries of a civil war. Failure only enraged,

without discouraging them, and fresh insults and wrongs helped to fan their fury. Their religious hierarchy was annihilated; and then to compel them, as it were, to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard, the Polish diet which assembled in 1638 enacted the abrogation of all their civil privileges and territorial revenues, and their degradation to the rank of serfs.

Uladislas VII. is generally spoken of as the tyrant of the Cossacks, but he was in this little better than a tool in the hands of his Polish nobles; and had he been allowed to follow out his own wishes, he would have been the protector instead of the persecutor of the Cossacks. The independence of the Cossacks, so different from the servile subjection of their own serfs, had long been a source of jealousy to the nobles, which only required such an interference with the selfish interests and supposed rights of their order to break out into the most passionate and uncontrolled violence. The spirit which a system of slavery ever engenders in the masters, was manifested, with all its worst features, by the Polish nobles, who regarded the struggles of the border Cossacks for their freedom and rights solely as an encroachment on the prerogatives of their own privileged order. They even formally adopted resolutions at the diet to extirpate the whole race, if they showed any disposition to escape the bondage to which they had doomed them. These cruel as well as impolitic excesses armed the whole body of the Cossacks, and

nerved them to the most resolute struggles in self-defence. They soon gave their haughty masters a proof of the alternative they had to choose between, in having them for friends or enemies. They made frequent irruptions into the palatinate of the grand duchy, spoiling it as an enemy's country; and, at the same time, they no longer interposed to prevent similar aggressions by the Tartars, against whom they had formerly proved a wall of defence. Hence the nobles suffered under a double retribution. Their estates were spoiled, their castles burned, their serfs carried away; and such was the terrible extent of these depredations, that from the domains of one of the most powerful Polish nobles, thirty thousand peasants were driven off, and sold as slaves to the Turks and Tartars.

Bogdan Chmielniski, a veteran Cossack, was originally the possessor of an extensive patrimonial estate in the neighbourhood of Zolkiew. While resident there, he rendered signal services by the defence of Zolkiew against the Tartars, and placed James Sobieski, the father of the heroic John III., under special obligations, by rescuing his wife from Tartar slavery. While Bogdan was still a young man, however, he incurred the implacable enmity of a powerful family with whom he had been previously at feud, by slaying one of its members in a quarrel; and, to escape the consequences, he fled to the Ukraine, and was welcomed by the warlike Cossacks as a brother in arms. There he acquired new property

as the reward of his military services, conferred on him by the grand general of the crown; and, during a period of twenty years' residence in the Ukraine, he maintained the lustre of his military character, first established by his defence of Zolkiew, and acquired a reputation for daring valour which was known far beyond the bounds of Polish or Cossack sway. This brave veteran had obtained certain lands near the banks of the Borysthenes, along with a windmill situated on a part of them, to which the covetous longings of Czapalinski, one of the usurious stewards of the Polish nobles claiming lands in the Ukraine, had been directed. Czapalinski well knew that the simplest way of acquiring the desired mill and estate was by the ruin of its owner. He accordingly summoned Bogdan before the tribunal of his master, Alexander Koniecpolski, grand ensign of the Polish crown, on some frivolous pretext, and he was cast into prison. Thus placed at the mercy of the unprincipled steward, in whose hands, most probably, as his master's deputy, the entire powers of the baron's court were entrusted, Bogdan Chmielniski would doubtless have perished in his hands. Happily, however, James Sobieski, whose wife Bogdan had saved from Tartar slavery more than twenty years before, was then Castellan of Cracow, and through his intervention Bogdan was restored to liberty. During the life of his protector, the Cossack chief remained in safety; but, immediately on his death, the former aggressive movements were resumed,

without even an attempt to disguise the lawless rapacity of his enemy. His indignant remonstrances were met by jeers and blows, and his continued resistance by an attempt at assassination. He then appealed to the National Diet sitting at Warsaw, pressing on their notice the services he had rendered to the nation, as well as the justice of his cause. But all was in vain. The Polish nobles looked only to their own short-sighted interests; and it is said that the avarice of Czapalinski was seconded by a desire to avenge some indignities he had suffered at the hands of some of Bogdan's followers. Bogdan had every reason to apprehend personal violence, and he accordingly fled beyond the Ukraine borders, and took refuge with his old Tartar foes. It is not supposed that, in taking this step, he had any design to procure the invasion of the Polish republic by their aid; but the insults and cruelties which the tyrannical nobles and their agents heaped upon him and others, roused him to avenge their great wrongs.

Czapalinski, the infamous steward, followed up his first success with remorseless rancour; and Bogdan learned, in his Tartar retreat, that, after having taken possession of his property, he had inflicted on his wife the worst indignities, and then murdered her, after which he set fire to the habitation where she had dwelt, and their infant son perished in its flames. His eldest son, Timothy, fired with indignation at such cruel wrongs, gave vent to his feelings in language such as an occasion like this might excite in a son and a

brother's mind. He was thereupon seized and publicly scourged.

Such was the experience of one family. It was only a specimen of what was endured by many others. But the cup had been filled to overflowing, and the hour of retribution was at hand. Bogdan Chmielniski roused both Tartars and Cossacks to avenge themselves on the tyrants. At the head of forty thousand Tartars, and of a much larger number of Cossacks, who had both his and their own wrongs to revenge, he swept like a mighty torrent across the doomed land. Two successive armies, raised by the republic to oppose them, were totally routed, their generals and superior officers made captives, and these, with seventy thousand peasants, consigned to hopeless bondage. The fury of the Cossacks was wreaked with a cruelty equal to that which had excited it, on such of their personal oppressors as fell into their hands; and the very existence of the Polish republic seemed to be threatened with an end. At this critical juncture, Uladislas VII. died, leaving the distracted and divided country without a head.

The victorious Bogdan marched with destructive fury through South-western Poland. The Jesuits, who had been active in persecuting the adherents of the Greek Church, and the Jews, whose usury and oppression had made them hateful to all, were the special objects of vengeance. Numerous Arians and other dissidents from the Roman Church in like manner flocked to his standard, in the hope of

revenging themselves for many cruel wrongs inflicted on them by the maintainers of Romish orthodoxy; while the Tartars of Bessarabia and the Crimea, along with Turks from the valley of the Lower Danube, joined this strange confederacy, in the hope of aiding in the overthrow of the republic, which had formed the western barrier of Christendom against Mussulman invasion. Heterogeneous as such a confederacy was, it possessed abundant elements of temporary union. All were actuated by one feeling of vindictive hatred against their antagonists, and by the stimulus of a keen sense of unavenged wrongs; and even the irreconcilable nature of their religious differences was sunk for the moment under a common feeling of hatred for that of their opponents. Jeremy Wisnowiecki, general of the grand duchy, who is represented as the soul of the Roman Catholic party, is described by contemporary writers as a monster of cruelty. In Lithuania he had inflicted terrific tortures on the Arian and Anabaptist heretics, and the secret adherents of these dissidents hastened to join their avengers, and to stimulate the hostility of their co-religionists by the narration of their own wrongs. Added to all this, Bogdan proclaimed himself everywhere the champion of the serfs, and their deliverer from bondage; and these hastened to join his ranks, influenced by other but no less potent stimulants to revenge.

Such were the terrible passions which swayed this army, uniting all the worst features of foreign inva-

sion with the most fatal elements of civil warfare and religious crusade; and assailing the unfortunate republic at the very moment when that constant source of weakness, its elective monarchy, placed it without a head, and introduced new elements of strife and division into its terrified hosts. The atrocities of the invaders fully equalled those which had provoked them. The churches and monasteries were committed to the flames, and every indignity and cruelty practised on the priests and nuns who fell into their hands; but the chief weight of their vengeance fell on the nobles. They were murdered with lingering and savage tortures; their wives and daughters were subjected to treatment often too horrible for description, before their eyes. Never was a country visited with a more terrible requital for the wrongs which its rulers had sanctioned and its nobles perpetrated, in the insolence of power: and the day of vengeance did not then cease; for it is a strange illustration of a retributive justice descending from the fathers to the children, generation after generation, to witness in every new degradation and wrong inflicted on Poland, these same Cossacks, whom she thrust out of her bosom and alienated by tyrannous oppressions, made the instruments of her punishment. Established as an independent kingdom, the Cossacks remained under the sovereignty of Bogdan till his death, after a reign of upwards of ten years; and under his son, George Chmielniski, they submitted to the Muscovite, to become, in his hands, the scourge

of the Poles, who had driven them forth from her bosom. Such were the final results of Bogdan's invasion, thus terribly begun. In the midst of this frightful convulsion, in which the downfall of Poland seemed inevitable, John Casimir was advanced to the unenviable honour of its throne.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN CASIMIR.

THE kings of a republic must, it would seem, present to us, in their history and character, many strange anomalies; and that such is actually the case, will be sufficiently apparent, by a glance at the story of John Casimir of Sweden, elected King of Poland in 1649. On the death of Stephen Batory—to whose wise policy Poland owed, though to so little purpose, the friendly alliance and co-operation of the Cossacks of the Ukraine—after the usual scene of anarchy and strife which characterized a Polish interregnum, Sigismund, prince royal of Sweden, was elected his successor. By his two wives, both archduchesses of Austria, and sisters, he had several sons, and, on his death, two of these, Uladislas and John, became candidates for the vacant throne. The former of these was the successful competitor for the unenviable honour, and it has been his misfortune to be blamed, by one class of writers, for the misdeeds of his nobles,

by which the Cossacks were for ever alienated from their allegiance, and, on the other hand, for the imbecility which disabled him from controlling the tyrannical nobles, and nipping in the bud so terrible an evil. Yet both the Muscovites and Turks felt his to be no nerveless hand, though it could not curb the wolfish passions of intestine warfare. But, as a Swede and a rival claimant for the Swedish crown, he was no match for the great Gustavus Adolphus, and he terminated a troubled reign amid disasters sufficient to sully a less doubtful reputation.

John Casimir, Uladislas' younger brother, after being his rival as a candidate for the Polish throne, bore an active part in the famous Thirty Years' War. Returning from the seat of war to Poland, he set out again, after a time, for Spain, though with what precise object is unknown. Though he had borne arms, with so many others, in the Thirty Years' War, against France, he did not conceive that that need interfere with his crossing its boundaries when the war was at an end; and he accordingly pursued his course from Germany to France, on his way to Spain. Casimir, however, had, in some way, incurred the implacable hatred of the Cardinal Richelieu, and he was seized by his orders while at Marseilles, and confined a close prisoner in the fortress of Sisteron, built on the summit of a steep rock, and excluded from all intercourse with the outer world. There he lay in rigorous captivity for two years, at the end of which time he was transferred to the Chateau of

Vincennes, but with no change of treatment; for the severity of his confinement and privations continued to be such as seemed to indicate the vindictiveness of personal animosity, rather than the mere policy of statecraft. On his condition becoming known, both the Pope and his brother, the King of Poland, interfered on his behalf, and his liberation was at length, with great difficulty, procured; but such was the depression of his spirits and the feebleness of his frame, arising from the severity of his treatment at Sisteron and Vincennes, that he renounced the world and became an ecclesiastic.

In his new position, John Casimir shared in the highest favours and honours of the church, and was advanced to the dignity of a cardinal; but he soon showed that his disgust with the world had not originated in an affection for a higher vocation, but only in the physical suffering and prostration which his captivity produced. With the sanction of the Pope, he resigned the dignity of cardinal, laid aside the ecclesiastical character, assumed the title of hereditary King of Sweden, and completed his defection from all priestly obligations, by again becoming a candidate for the crown of Poland, and a suitor for the hand of his brother's widow, on the death of Uladislas VII. The candidates for what might have seemed to most men a most unenviable crown, were the Muscovite Czar, Alexis, father of Peter the Great; Ragotski, Voyvode of Transylvania; John Casimir, the unfrocked cardinal, and his younger brother, the Bishop

of Breslau, who was equally willing to resign his ecclesiastical functions and take to himself a wife and a crown.

It was a strange thing for Europe to witness, in the middle of the seventeenth century, two brothers, invested with the highest honours of the priesthood, and bound by the most solemn obligations, voluntarily assumed, thus opposing each other as rival claimants for objects from which they had seemed irrevocably excluded. It was sufficiently characteristic of the pliancy of the Romish Church, where her own interests are concerned, that neither of the brother priests had any difficulty in procuring absolution from their most solemn vows, or saw any insurmountable difficulty in their desire to marry a sister-in-law. The two brothers were extremely different. The Bishop of Breslau is described as a stern bigot, well fitted to have revived the atrocities which had been perpetrated against the Arian and Anabaptist heretics, by the savage Jeremy Wisnowiecki, under his brother Uladislus. John Casimir, on the contrary, was a favourite both with the queen and nobles, for his extreme mildness and amiable manners, as well as his tolerant disposition. His election as King of Poland, accordingly, seemed, from an early period of the contest, to be certain, and he gave proof of his politic moderation, by writing to Bogdan—who, it will be remembered, was then ravaging the country—so strongly condemning the injustice he had suffered, and protesting his desire to see the pacification of the

republic effected on such conditions as would be equally advantageous to Pole and Cossack, that Bogdan remained inactive during the election, willingly trusting to the promised redress at his hands.

John Casimir, whose singular early career we have thus described, was elected at this critical period, by the Polish diet, to the unenviable honours of Polish sovereignty; and he soon learned what cares accompany the acquisition of such coveted supremacy. It is most strange indeed, to witness one who, from disgust at the world and inability to cope successfully with its trials, had withdrawn to the cloister, throwing off the ecclesiastical character and breaking its irrevocable vows, in order to encounter difficulties and dangers far worse than all he had before endured. By his voluntary act, he plunged at once into a vortex of strife and turmoil, requiring far different qualities from those that such a previous career as his would seem to promise. The Cossack Hetman, Bogdan Chmielniski, still lay in the vicinity of Zamosk, trusting to the friendly overtures of the new king; and, when a letter was despatched to him by the king, immediately after his election, renewing the negotiations he had proposed, the Cossack chief pressed the royal letter respectfully to his lips, and issued orders for the suppression of all hostilities. All things promised an honourable termination of the struggle, without the sacrifice of the national honour or the interests of the rival parties; and it must have seemed to many interested lookers-on as if the untimely choice of a king from

the cloisters, to be the chief of a people embroiled in a war embittered by such cruel wrongs, was to prove in reality the happiest selection. Everything presaged peace, when the savage Jeremy Wisnowiecki once more interfered, and, regardless of the national honour or the promises of the king, surprised the Cossack camp, while they lay, unsuspecting of treachery, confiding in the amnesty, and committed a terrible slaughter on them. Multitudes perished in the long and devastating wars which followed. On one occasion, a body of forty thousand Poles are said to have been nearly exterminated by a Cossack force suddenly surprising them, under the leadership of Bogdan and his son. John Casimir meanwhile embroiled himself with the Polish nobles in many ways. The vice-chancellor Radzichowski sought vengeance on him for private wrongs, and effectually aided Sweden against his country for this purpose. Bogdan had, meanwhile, sought the aid of John Casimir's rival, the Muscovite Czar Alexis, and two hundred thousand Muscovites marched upon Lithuania. It seemed as if the dismemberment and destruction of Poland was about to be accomplished before the great Czar had appeared to make Russia an object of its fear. Poland it was, and not Russia, which made of the Cossacks such deadly foes to the country of their first allegiance; and bitter and lasting has been their revenge.

The story of John Casimir of Poland ends in accordance with its beginning. He was an imbe-

cile prince, called to the throne at a time when the wisest and the bravest would have found the duties of sovereignty over such a people most difficult. He was not, indeed, deficient in personal bravery; but he seems to have lacked every other manly characteristic which the times demanded. When the utter blotting out of Poland from the rank of nations seemed inevitable, it was saved as by a miracle. Yet it is not unjustly said by one of the historians of Poland, that the reign of John Casimir was as unfortunate in its internal policy as in its foreign relations. He was, indeed, to the last, a licentious priest, a slave to the influences which he could not lay aside with his cardinal's robes. He was the tool of the Jesuits, and religious persecution again flourished during his reign. The disputed successions which harassed

Poland on the death of each sovereign were introduced, in consequence of his imbecility, during his lifetime, among the elements of dissension which troubled his reign. The seeds of revolt were fostered by his unconstitutional proceedings, and at length the unfrocked cardinal, who had been absolved from his ecclesiastical vows to wear a crown, and from the obligations of the church in order to marry his brother's widow, took the resolution of resigning the sceptre he could not wield, and once more seeking peace within the cloisters. Resuming his religious habit, he, for the last time, addressed the Diet of Poland, in words not wanting in a dignity and pathos suited to the occasion:—

“PEOPLE OF POLAND,—It is now two hundred and eighty years that you have been governed by my family. The reign of my ancestors is past, and mine is going to expire. Fatigued by the labours of war, the cares of the cabinet, and the weight of age; oppressed with the burdens and solitudes of a reign of more than twenty-one years, I, your king and father, return into your hands what the world esteems above all things, a crown; and choose for my throne six feet of earth, where I shall sleep in peace with my fathers.”

After his abdication, John Casimir retired to France, the country of his former imprisonment, from the dungeons of which he had only escaped before, to renounce the world; and there being received into the fraternity of St. Germain-des-Prés, he was soon after made abbot of the monastery. He died about five years afterwards. “His reign,” says one of his country’s historians, “has added another proof of the bad effects of engrafting the sceptre on the crosier.” Such is the remarkable story of the sovereign during whose reign the Cossacks of the Ukraine were finally dissevered from Poland, and became the allies and the vassals of Russia.

CHAPTER V.

MICHAEL THE IMBECILE, AND HIS SUCCESSOR.

AMONG the supposed evils of a hereditary monarchy, none are more insisted upon than the necessity it involves of taking the chance gifts of primogeniture, and submitting to a ruler who may be, according to the accident of birth, the most gifted or the most imbecile of his race. This evil at least, Poland was delivered from, when the death of Sigismund without a male heir restored the crown to his subjects for their own disposal. Their choice was altogether unlimited, for they neither confined themselves to their own country, nor dictated any inflexible rule as to the class from whom their king should be selected. Yet it has been truly said, that Sigismund's funeral knell was the tocsin of anarchy in Poland. Jealousies and rivalry kept the nobles constantly in fear of each other, and a mean and short-sighted spirit of suspicious equality made this body of turbulent, fierce, and ungovernable barons willing to subject themselves to any domineering and treacherous interference of foreign powers, rather than see one of their own peers advanced to the coveted honour. Thus the crown of Poland was flung down as a prize for the competition of foreign princes, and the neighbouring powers learned to look forward to the close of each reign as an opportunity for making that

divided country a tool for securing their own interests. It was only as the last means of escape from a dangerous collision of conflicting interests, that unhappy Poland ever thought of looking at home for a king. Hence, on the recurrence of such an election of the nation's chief, instead of its being looked upon as a valuable occasion for exercising the rights of free-men, even the most turbulent of the nobles learned to anticipate it with dread. Death, which freed the monarch from a weary load of cares, threw them as a burden on the nobles; and accordingly, when John Casimir had anticipated the great release by voluntarily resigning his crown, the barons showed their sense of the embarrassment which they felt in the exercise of their elective rights, by enacting, as the first edict of the Diet of Convocation, that no Polish king could ever again abdicate. The fetters of royalty he was free to refuse; but having once assumed them, death only could take them off.

But for the fatal elements of an ever-recurring dissension and strife, how different might the fate of Poland have been! In the sixteenth century, Zolkiewski, the chancellor and grand-general of Poland, entered Moscow in triumph, and took both the reigning Czar and his brother prisoners. Poland then became the disposer of the Russian crown, and Zolkiewski entered Warsaw in triumph, with a Russian Czar in his train, and adorned the Polish capital with monuments of his victories, the last of which was ordered to be destroyed by the Empress Catherine. Till Peter the Great

had consolidated the Muscovite Empire, and started it on its new career of progress, it seemed far more probable that Poland should hold Russia in check, than that the Muscovite should ever triumph in her capital, and erase from the tablets of Warsaw the records of older triumphs. So is it, however; in the errors of to-day we are paving the way for the retribution of the morrow.

When John Casimir voluntarily resigned the crown which had become an intolerable burden to him, in order that he might once more seek repose in the cloister, which he had so long forsaken, there was no difficulty found from a want of aspirants for the unenviable honour. Among the candidates appeared the eldest son of the Czar; the Prince of Neuberg, an ally, or rather tool, of Louis XIV.; Charles of Lorraine, a prince in the interests of Austria; and the Prince of Condé, who was supported by the primate and the great barons. But besides these, there was another powerful though secret aspirant to the throne. John Sobieski, who was now both grand-general and grand-marshal, was possessed, as such, of almost absolute power both in military and civil affairs, and employed this in secretly clearing the way for his own advancement to the throne. While apparently throwing the weight of his influence on the side of the Prince of Condé, he was privately exciting a spirit of nationality, and forming a party in favour of a native Pole. Thus far he succeeded, but the misery of all such party struggles is, that ability and

genius only serve to incite jealousy. The cry of a Piast was suddenly raised while the electors were ranged on the plain, under the banners of their respective palatinates. The unexpected cry, which demanded the choice of a native Pole, was caught up and echoed with all the wild enthusiasm of a tumultuous movement in a divided assembly. The hopes of the rival candidates failed, and the jealous partisans satisfied their mutual apprehensions by fixing on the meanest object within their reach. The crown of Poland was accordingly placed on the head of Michael Koributh, surnamed The Imbecile.

The new king was the son of the infamous Jeremy Wisnowiecki, detested alike for his barbarities and his treachery, even by those who had borne a share in his base deeds. He claimed, indeed, it is said, a lineal descent from the Jagellons; but he was destitute alike of ambition, courage, and manly spirit. In person he was deformed, and in mind weak. He had spent his earlier years in obscurity, and on reaching maturity he entered a monastery at Warsaw, and assumed the cowl of a monk, hoping to live in the retirement of the cloister unmolested by the cares and strife of the world, and to go down unheeded to his grave. It was by chance that he presented himself among the assembled barons on the day of election, little dreaming that the very infirmities of his body and the weakness of his mind would be his passports to the suffrages of rival partisans. When he saw himself made the scapegoat of hostile fac-

tions, he besought them, with abject tears, to allow him to refuse the uncoveted royalty. His supplications were all in vain, "and when his entreaties were received with howls of 'Most serene king, you shall reign!' he mounted his horse, and precipitately fled from the plain. He was pursued, brought back, forced to accept the *pacta conventa* which had been prepared for the successful candidate, and to promise before the assembled multitude, whose outrageous demonstrations of homage he well knew were intended to insult his incapacity, that he would never seek to evade his new duties. To relieve his extreme poverty, some of the wealthier barons immediately filled his empty apartments with household furniture, and his still emptier kitchen with cheer, to which he had never before been accustomed. In these studied attentions there was more of contempt than of good nature. The mockery was complete, when, in the diploma of his elevation, it was expressed that he was the sun of the republic, the proudest boast of a mighty line of princes—one who left the greatest of the Piasts, the Jagellons, or the Vasas, far behind him!"

When Casimir learned of his late subjects' choice of a successor, he exclaimed, "What! have they set the crown upon the head of that poor creature?" Yet this imbecile monk, though worthless for all good, was a less pliable tool in the hands of the electoral body than probably they anticipated. He paid no regard to the *pacta conventa*, married an

Austrian archduchess in spite of the diet, and still further involved in confusion his divided country. "Though the public treasury was empty, though Poland had no army, even when the Cossacks and Tartars were preparing to invade her, two consecutive diets were dissolved, and their proceedings consequently nullified, by the veto. Then the quarrels of the deputies—quarrels which were not unfrequently decided by the sword—introduced a perfect contempt for the laws, as well as for all authority other than that of brute force. The poor monarch strove in vain to reconcile the hostile factions; his entreaties—he was too timid or too prudent to use threats—were disregarded, even by such as the distribution of crown benefices had at first allied with his interests. Without decision, without vigour, without money or troops, and consequently without the means of commanding respect from any one of his subjects, he was the scorn or jest of all. A resolution was soon taken to dethrone this phantom of royalty. The turbulent primate Prasmowski was the soul of the conspiracy, which was rendered still more formidable by the accession of the monarch's own queen, unhappy Eleanor. In the view of obtaining a divorce, and of procuring the elevation to the throne of one who had long been her lover—the Prince of Lorraine—she scrupled not to plot against her husband and king. It was, in fact, but exchanging one lord for another—a despised for a beloved one; and whether the plot failed or succeeded, she was sure of

a husband and a throne. Fortunately for Michael, there was another conspiracy, the object of which was to transfer the queen and the sceptre to a French prince. Thus one faction neutralized the other; but in the end one of them would doubtless have triumphed, notwithstanding the adhesion of the lesser nobles to the reigning king—an adhesion, however, not the result of attachment to the royal person, but solely of hostility to the great barons—had not the loud notes of warlike preparation drowned for a moment the noisy contentions of the rebels.”

Disease had long preyed on Michael, and added to all the other sources of imbecility, when, to the joy of thousands, he expired at Lemberg, the night before the great battle of Kotzim, fought by Sobieski against the Turks, in 1673; and the conquerors, wearied with the sufferings resulting from the faction-made king, placed their victorious leader on the vacant throne.

The ceremonial at the inauguration of the Polish sovereign was at all times impressively symbolical. In 1079, St. Stanislas, bishop of Cracow, fell a martyr to the violence of Boleslas II., a king detested for his cruelty, debauchery, and extortion. Such was his hasty violence and atrocity, that, among all his nobles and courtiers, Stanislas, bishop of Cracow, was the only man courageous enough to expostulate with him on his excesses, and to urge the necessity of amendment. “Mild, and even affectionate, as was the manner of this excellent prelate, the only

effect which it had was to draw on him the persecution of the king. But persecution could not influence a man so conscious of his good purposes, and so strong in his sense of duty. He returned to his exhortations; but finding that leniency had no good result, he excommunicated the royal delinquent. Rage took possession of the soul of Boleslas; but instead of 'turning from the evil of his ways,' he became the more shameless in his iniquities. Stanislas had now recourse to one of the last bolts which the church held in the storehouse of her thunders: he placed an interdict on all the churches of Cracow; a measure at all times more violent than just, and in the present case not likely to have any other effect than to harden impenitence. Now no longer master of his fury, the king swore the destruction of the prelate, whose steps he caused to be watched by his creatures. Hearing one day that Stanislas was to celebrate mass in a chapel situated on a hill beyond the Vistula, he took with him a few determined followers, and on reaching the extensive plain in the centre of which the hill lay, he perceived from afar his destined victim ascending to the chapel. He was at the doors of the sacred edifice before the conclusion of the office; but eager as was his thirst for instant vengeance, he forebore to interrupt the solemn act of worship in which Stanislas and the attendant clergy were engaged. When all was over, he ordered some of his guards to enter and assassinate the prelate. They were restrained, say the chroniclers, by

the hand of Heaven ; for, in endeavouring to strike him with their swords, as he calmly stood before the altar, they were miraculously thrown backwards on the ground. They retreated from the place, but were again forced to return by Boleslas. A second and a third time, we are told, was the miracle repeated, until the king, losing all patience, and fearless alike of divine and human punishment, entered the chapel himself, and with one blow of his ponderous weapon dashed out the brains of the churchman. If the miracle be fabulous, the tragedy at least was true.

“Neither Boleslas of Poland nor Henry of England could murder an ecclesiastic with impunity ; and enemies as we must all be to the extravagant pretensions of the church in these ages, we can scarcely censure the power which was formidable enough to avenge so dark a deed. Gregory VII., who then filled the chair of St. Peter, hurled his anathemas against the murderer, whom he deposed from the royal dignity, absolving his subjects from their oaths of allegiance, and at the same time placing an interdict on the whole kingdom. The proud soul of Boleslas disdained submission to the Church ; he endeavoured to resist the execution of its mandates ; but he speedily found, that in an age when the haughtiest and most powerful monarchs were made to bend before the spiritual throne, such resistance could only seal the fate denounced against him. He was now regarded with horror by clergy and people. In daily fear of assassination by his own people, who univer-

sally avoided him, he fled into Hungary, accompanied by his son Miecislav, in the hope of interesting in his behalf the reigning king of that country. But Uladislav, the brother of Geysa, who had succeeded Salomon, though he pitied the fugitive, had no wish to bring down on his own head the thunders of Gregory; and Boleslav, after a short stay, was compelled to seek another asylum. His end is wrapt in great obscurity. One account says that he retired to a monastery in Carinthia, to expiate his crime by penance; another, that his senses forsook him, and that in one of his deranged fits he destroyed himself; a third, that he was torn to pieces by his own dogs when hunting; and a fourth, that being compelled to occupy a mean situation, he preserved his incognito until the hour of death, when he astonished his confessor by the disclosure of his birth and crimes."

This deed of blood was regarded as a foul stain to be abjured by every successor of Boleslav who wished to stand well with the Church; and thus from century to century the forms of the Polish coronation service perpetuated the expiation of the sacrilegious murder.

But other and more pressing duties had a prior claim on the warrior-king of Poland. "Before the coronation ceremonies were performed, Sobieski determined to prosecute the war with the Turks. His object in deferring the solemnity of inauguration seems to have been that he might retain the office of grand-general for a time. Sobieski appears to have fought with the stimulus of personal animosity;

every Moslem whom he killed was another libation of atonement to appease the manes of his slaughtered relatives. Every enemy whom he laid low might have been the murderer of his uncle or his brother, and at least revenge was satisfied with the blood that was shed. After various skirmishes, the Polish troops encountered the Turks and Tartars near Leopold in Galicia; the former mustered only fifteen thousand, while they had to contend with above sixty thousand. Although it was in the month of August, there was a heavy fall of snow, which fortunately served to incommode the enemy. The superstitious Poles exclaimed, 'A miracle!' The writers of the times record it as one, and Sobieski had too much good sense to undeceive them.

"Trusting that they had God on their side, they fought with the firm belief that they should conquer, and most probably every one of the ten thousand dead bodies which the Turks are said to have left on the field, was in their eyes a confirmation of their faith. The enemy fled in one night as many leagues as they had marched in three days before.

"The vizier, in the course of his retreat, invested Trembowla, a small town strongly fortified, in Podolia, which was defended by Samuel Chrasonowski, a renegade Jew. He first tried negotiation, but the brave Jewish governor returned this answer: 'Thou art mistaken if thou expectest to find gold within these walls: we have nothing here but steel and soldiers; our number indeed is small, but our courage

is great.' The Turkish general then ordered the place to be cannonaded, but all to no purpose. The wife of the Jewish commander was as resolute as her husband, and assisted with her own hands to supply ammunition. The Polish nobles who were stationed there did not, however, emulate the example of their female general, but began to plan a surrender. They were overheard by the heroine, who ran through the thickest of the fire to inform her husband, and he, by dint of threats and persuasion, induced them to hold out.

"The attack was carried on with increased vigour; the sturdy walls of Trembowla trembled, and the governor began to fear that the Lord of Hosts had abandoned him. His wife perceived his anxiety, and seizing two poniards, said to her husband: 'One of these is destined for thee, if thou surrenderest this town; the other I intend for myself.'

"But the Jew was not fated to become a modern Pætus, for almost at this very crisis, the Polish army, headed by Sobieski, appeared in sight, and gave the Turks more important matters to engage their attention. The Moslem forces were again routed with the loss of seven or eight thousand men, and retreated to Kamiéniec, the chief town of Podolia, where they made their stay during the winter.

"Sobieski spent the interim in the ceremonies of coronation, which were of great importance in Poland, where the king was little more than a *rex designatus*, till that form had taken place. The funeral of the

and brand of persecution had raged with merciless fury. One pleasant story is told of his mode of dealing with a Jesuit ghost. "It was rumoured that a ghost had appeared in the house of a Polish gentleman in Volhynia, and had also made very serious remarks on the king and his government. Pamphlets of all kinds were laid to the charge of the curtilous spirit; and a Jesuit, Gnievosz, chaplain to the grand-general, bore witness to the reality of the apparition. The king, who was not to be frightened by shadows, and was not to be made a fool of by signing or the credulous, sent an intelligent officer to have a colloquy with the ghost, and demand the essentials from the king on the other side of the veil. The spirit was soon laid, and the king readily understood who were the plotters of the terror, and he forgot to retaliate. Seeing his Jesuit superior at court, he said to him, after mentioning the story, 'Well, what does your rascal, Gnievosz, do that?' The Jesuit imagined this but a petty further disgrace, and was so affected that he finally died in consequence before the expiration of ten days.

The same order took the liberty of encroaching on some of the queen's lands by means of interposition of a confused title-deed; but the king was not so easily imposed on, and he resolved to put an end to this aggression also, by writing to the general of the Jesuits, 'I will not summon your brethren to appear before the diet, where I should

deceased king was always deferred till his successor had been appointed to succeed him; so particular were the Poles to avoid an appearance of interregnum and anarchy in a country whose very government was a tissue of insubordination. On the present occasion, by a singular coincidence, it happened that two kings were to be committed to the grave. Casimir had lately died in France, and one dirge was sung at the obsequies of both him and Michael. This was really a practical method of teaching new monarchs that

‘ Within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps Death his court.’

The ceremony then concluded with the singular form already referred to. Every new king was obliged to appear in the Stanislas-Kirche, where Boleslas murdered the prelate. But, as if he were the perpetrator of the deed, Sobieski went to the spot on foot, and declared, as was the custom, that the crime was atrocious, that he was innocent of it, detested it, and asked pardon for it, by imploring the protection of the martyr upon himself and his kingdom.”

Sobieski's name is known to all, as the hero not alone of Poland, but of Western Europe, for which he stood in the van of Christendom, to stem the flood of Moslem invasion. It is gratifying to know that the same conqueror of the infidel hosts abroad, could deal with a like vigour with the Jesuits at home, under whose influence, in previous reigns, the sword

and brand of persecution had raged with merciless fury. One pleasant story is told of his mode of dealing with a Jesuit ghost. "It was rumoured that a ghost had appeared in the house of a Polish gentleman in Volhynia, and had also made very serious remarks on the king and his government. Pasquines of all kinds were laid to the charge of the scurrilous spirit; and a Jesuit, Gniewosz, chaplain to the grand-general, bore witness to the reality of the apparition. The king, who was not to be frightened by shadows, and was not to be made a dupe of the designing or the credulous, sent an intelligent officer to have a colloquy with the ghost, and demand his credentials from the king on the other side of the grave. The spirit was soon laid, and the king readily understood who were the plotters of the trick; nor did he forget to retaliate. Seeing his Jesuit confessor at court, he said to him, after mentioning the ghost story, 'Well, what does your rascal, Gniewosz, say to that?' The Jesuit imagined this but a prelude to further disgrace, and was so affected that he actually died in consequence before the expiration of eight days.

"The same order took the liberty of encroaching on some of the queen's lands by means of interpolated or confused title-deeds; but the king soon stopped this aggression also, resolutely but mildly. In writing to the general of the Jesuits, he said, 'I shall not summon your brethren at Jaroslaw to appear before the diet, where I should have, on my

side, both justice and the respect that is due to me. I am afraid of increasing, by this means, the hatred which is already borne you. I only advise you to be upon your guard against those who have the management of your houses.' This quickly produced a restitution of the purloined property, and the Jesuits were in future more on their guard in affronting Sobieski."

It is abroad, however, and as the soldier, rather than at home as the king, that even Sobieski—who has been styled "the last independent king of Poland"—appears to most advantage. Intrigues and factions impeded and confounded all his domestic rule; yet that is reward and praise enough which has been said of him by one of the historians of his country: "Under any other monarch, Poland would have been erased from the list of nations. His vigorous arm for a time arrested her in her rapid fall." No wonder that his name has been a rallying cry for the Polish patriot in later times, or that he has fondly sought to make his solitary pilgrimage to some of the famed battle-fields, where still the small crosses mark the graves of Poland's heroic sons.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN.

THE modern Alexander, the leader of the Imperial legions of France, burst upon the effete and imbecile governments and rulers of Europe, like a wild thunder-storm amid the stagnant atmosphere of tropical climates. Russia, though so recently renovated under a Czar not unworthy to have coped with Napoleon, stood as much in need of the purifying influences of the political storm as the most antiquated of the monarchies of Europe; and the vast empire of the Czars seemed for a time to totter to its fall under the approaching vengeance of the triumphant legions of France.

The year 1812 found Napoleon's restless spirit tired of a round of state ceremonial and courtly frivolities, and ready once more to embark in some of those comprehensive schemes of ambition which such seasons of apparent rest sufficed him to mature. He sent for De Pradt, Archbishop of Malines, whose services he proposed to employ as ambassador at Warsaw; and in what Sir Walter Scott has justly characterized as a singular style of diplomacy, he thus gave him his commission: "I am about to make trial of you. You may believe I did not send for you here to say mass,"—which ceremony the archbishop had performed that morning. "You

must keep a great establishment; have an eye to the women, their influence is essential in that country. You know Poland; you have read Rulhieres. For me, I go to beat the Russians; time is flying; we must have all over by the end of September; perhaps we are even already too late. I am tired to death here; I have been here eight days playing the courtier to the Empress of Austria." He then threw out indistinct hints of compelling Austria to quit her hold on Galicia, and accept an indemnification in Illyria, or otherwise remain without any. As to Prussia, he avowed his intention, when the war was over, to ruin her completely, and to strip her of Silesia. "I am on my way to Moscow," he added; "two battles there will do the business. I will burn Thoula; the Emperor Alexander will come on his knees, and then is Russia disarmed. All is ready, and only waits my presence. Moscow is the heart of their empire; besides, I make war at the expense of the blood of the Poles. I will leave fifty thousand of my Frenchmen in Poland. I will convert Dantzic into another Gibraltar. I will give fifty millions a-year in subsidies to the Poles. I can afford the expense. Without Russia be included, the Continental System would be mere folly. Spain costs me very dear; without her I should be master of the world; but when I am so, my son will have nothing to do but to keep his place, and it does not require to be very clever to do that. Go, take your instructions from Maret."

In this singularly informal ambassadorial commission we have a curious insight into the far-reaching schemes of Napoleon's ambition, and his confidence of success. But Russia took up a calm position, and an attitude of defence which promised a stern resistance to the invading legions, whatever might be the final fortunes of war. Napoleon, while subduing successively the ancient monarchies of Europe, had not effected the conquest of their armies without imparting to some of their military chiefs fresh insight into the tactics by which such victories were effected. The military adviser and chief of the Russian Emperor, Alexander, was Barclay de Tolly, a German by immediate birth, but a Scotsman by extraction, and uniting in some degree the characteristics of both fatherlands. His cautious tactics are thus described in Scott's life of Napoleon: "He proposed that the Russians should first show only so much opposition on the frontier of their country, as should lay the invaders under the necessity of marching with precaution and leisure; that they should omit no means of annoying their communications, and disturbing the base on which they rested, but should carefully avoid everything approaching to a general action. On this principle it was proposed to fall back before the invaders, refusing to engage in any other action than skirmishes, and those upon advantage, until the French lines of communication, extended to an immeasurable length, should become liable to be cut off even by the insurgent peasantry."

In the meanwhile, as the French became straitened in provisions and deprived of recruits and supplies, the Russians were to be reinforcing their army, and at the same time refreshing it. Thus it was the object of this plan of the campaign not to fight the French forces, until the bad roads, want of provisions, toilsome marches, diseases, and loss in skirmishes, should have deprived the invading army of all its original advantages of numbers, spirit, and discipline. This procrastinating system of tactics suited Russia the better, that her preparations for defensive war were very far from being completed, and that it was important to gain time to receive arms and other supplies from England, as well as, by making peace with the Turks, to obtain the disposal of the large army now engaged upon the Danube."

Subject, however, as the Russians are to the will of a despotic ruler, De Tolly did not overlook that they were beings subject to human passions, and could scarcely be expected to acquiesce in the policy of retreat before an army of invaders, wasting their country, destroying their villages, and sacking their towns as they fell in their way. A large fortified camp was accordingly prepared at Drissa, on the River Dwina, calculated to cover St. Petersburg, should Napoleon threaten the capital, and at the same time to give confidence to the Russian soldiery during a protracted period of inaction.

The immense hosts which Napoleon was concen-

trating on Russia demanded all the energy and wisdom of her leaders adequately to oppose. Though constituting one great army, the French forces occupied an area the extended front of which measured not less than an hundred and twenty French leagues. The left wing, commanded by Macdonald, consisted of above 30,000 men. Prince Schwartzenberg commanded the right wing, numbering above 40,000 men; while the grand army extended between these flanks. The total number of the immense army which Napoleon's genius and fortune enabled him to concentrate on the frontiers of Russia amounted to 470,000 men; opposed to which all the exertions of the Emperor Alexander failed to raise more than 260,000 men, a large military force, but seemingly altogether inadequate to cope with the overwhelming body of invaders. The army of Napoleon was indeed a wonderful evidence of his power and widely extended sway as a conqueror, as well as of the estimation he had acquired as one result of his victories. The Poles crowded to his standard, animated by patriotic desires for the regeneration of their country; while varied motives of hope, apprehension, or the sullen obedience of the conquered, gathered to the grand army Germans, Italians, Swiss, and Austrians, all subject to the will of that solitary man, whose restless ambition was dragging this unprecedented host of warriors to perish amid the snows of a Russian winter. Alison justly remarks of the Russian invading army: "No such stupendous

accumulation of armed men had yet been formed in modern times, or probably since the beginning of the world." While, however, the army which Russia was able to oppose to this mighty crusade seemed altogether inadequate, the wise policy of the plan pursued gradually tended to equalize the forces so opposed. While every day's delay accumulated new difficulties around the invaders, diminished their resources, and reduced their numbers, the forces of Russia were constantly receiving accessions as the theatre of war drew near to the heart of the empire; and when the invaders were at length compelled to retreat, they fled before an army nearly equal in numbers, and superior in nearly every other qualification which adds to the moral force of masses. The mighty force which Napoleon led to

the conquest of Russia, entered on the provinces which form the western frontier of Russia; and there he was soon taught the obstacles which are inevitable in such a warfare. The flat, swampy, and pine-clad Polish provinces, covered with gloomy forests, and exhibiting only few and miserable villages, were like a country swept by a plague of locusts when the Imperial hosts marshalled within their borders. "No sooner," says Alison, "had he arrived in Poland, than the Emperor was assailed by the cries of the peasantry, who were ruined by his soldiers. Notwithstanding the utmost exertions on his part to prevent pillage, and to provide for their necessities, the enormous multitude of men and

horses who were assembled speedily exhausted the country. It was in vain that his prudent foresight had provided numerous battalions of light and heavy chariots for the provisioning of the army; innumerable carriages laden with tools of every description, twenty-six squadrons of waggons laden with military equipages, several thousand light caissons, carrying luxuries as well as objects of necessity of every description, and six complete sets of pontoons; the wants of such a prodigious accumulation of troops speedily exhausted all the means of subsistence which the country afforded, and all the stores they could convey with them. Forced requisitions of horses, chariots, and oxen from the peasantry, soon became necessary; and the Poles, who expected deliverance from their bondage, were stripped of everything they possessed by their liberators. To such a pitch did the misery subsequently arrive, that the richest families in Warsaw were literally in danger of starving, and the interest of money rose to eighty per cent. Yet such was the rapidity of the marches at the opening of the campaign, that the greater part of these exactions were abandoned or destroyed before the army had advanced many leagues into the Russian territory.

“ Enormous magazines had been formed to provide for the wants of the troops in the campaign. By the treaty which had been concluded with Prussia a short time before, that unhappy country was compelled to furnish 220,000 quintals of oats, 24,000 of rice,

2,000,000 bottles of beer, 400,000 quintals of wheat, 600,000 of straw, 350,000 of hay, 6,000,000 boisseaux of oats, 44,000 oxen, 15,000 horses, 3,600 carriages, harnessed and furnished with drivers and horses; and hospitals provided with every requisite for 20,000 patients. At Dantzic, the grand dépôt of the army, innumerable military stores were collected, and magazines capable of being transported by water through the Frischaff to Königsberg, and by land across the country to Interberg, where they were received on the Niemen. The active and impassioned mind of the Emperor had long been incessantly occupied with this object; the whole day was passed in dictating letters to his generals on the subject; in the night he frequently rose from bed to reiterate his commands. 'For masses such as are now to be put in movement,' said he, 'the resources of no country can suffice. All the caissons must be ready to be laden with bread, flour, rice, vegetables, and brandy, besides what is requisite for the moveable columns. My manœuvres may assemble in a moment four hundred thousand men at one point; the country will be totally unable to provide for them; everything must be brought by themselves.'"

The real dangers, it is apparent, had not been overlooked by the experienced leader. It soon became manifest, however, how very far short of the reality his worst anticipations had been. On the 24th and 25th of June 1812, the invaders crossed the Nie-

men, under a sultry summer sun, the excessive heat of which was followed by other manifestations of the extraordinary temperature, unusual except in tropical climates. A hurricane suddenly burst on the assembled host, now crowding a sterile and exhausted country. "The horses," says Alison, "perished by thousands from the combined effects of incessant rain and unwholesome provender; one hundred and twenty pieces of cannon, and five hundred caissons, were left at Wilna without the means of transport; above ten thousand dead horses were found on the highway leading to that city alone; thirty thousand disbanded soldiers spread desolation round the army; and before it had been six days in the Russian territory, or a single shot fired, twenty-five thousand sick and dying men filled the hospitals of Wilna and the villages of Lithuania."

At Wilna, however, the most enthusiastic reception awaited Napoleon. The ancient national banners of Poland were raised amid the acclamations of thousands. He was hailed both by the people and by the reconstituted Polish diet as the liberator of Poland; and such was the practical influence of these patriotic movements, that, in the course of this campaign, the Poles furnished to Napoleon upwards of eighty-five thousand men. But it was not men that Napoleon wanted, to achieve the objects of his ambition in the Russian campaign. On the contrary, many of the early disasters which defeated all his plans have been ascribed to the inevitable conse-

quences of an expedition conducted on a scale exceeding the bounds of human strength, and demanding the surmounting of difficulties which were only augmented by the multitude who were assembled to ensure its success. Pillage increased to a frightful extent. The troops were dispersed for leagues on every side in quest of subsistence; and the vast army seemed in danger of dissolution before it ever came into action. Exposure, inadequate rations, and excessive fatigue, told with fearful fatality on the troops almost from the commencement of the expedition, and, as Alison remarks, before a great part of the army had even seen the enemy, it had already undergone a loss greater than might have been expected in the most bloody campaign.

On the 16th of August, the first attack on Smolensko was made by the French advanced corps, under Nery; while Ræffskoi, the Russian general, was watching with anxiety for the approach of the main army to augment his inadequate forces, beleaguered there by the mighty hosts of France. Barclay and Bagrathion did arrive with the Russian main army, but not till Ney had already been repulsed. Everywhere the French assailants were driven back with heavy loss; till at length, towards the evening of the 17th, some French howitzers succeeded in setting fire to a few houses near the ramparts. A great part of the city was built of wood; and soon was witnessed the first of those terrible conflagrations which were far more disastrous to the

invaders than to those on whom they inflicted such terrors of war.

The scene which followed is thus described by Alison : " The weather was calm and serene, and the unclouded sky reminded the Italian soldiers of the sunsets in their beautiful country. To the roar of artillery and the tumult of mortal conflict, succeeded a night of tranquillity unusual in the midst of such numerous assemblages of men, the result of the fatigue and exhaustion of the preceding days. In the midst of this momentary repose the fires spread with unresisted violence, and a vast column of flame ascended from the interior of the city. Around this blazing centre, the corps of the French army were grouped in dense masses for several miles in circumference; the light of their watch-fires illuminated the heavens; but every eye was arrested by the spectacle of the burning city within. A dark band in front marked the yet unbroken line of the battlements; every loophole and embrasure was clearly defined by the resplendent light behind, whence volumes of flame and burning smoke arose, as from a vast volcano, over half the heavens : a lurid light, like that of Vesuvius, was cast over the extended bivouacs of the French army, while the lofty domes of the cathedral, still untouched by the conflagration, stood in dark magnificence above the ocean of flame. The troops beheld with dismay the splendid spectacle, and, uncertain of the event, rested in suspense all night on their arms.

“At three in the morning, a patrol of Davoust scaled the walls, and penetrated without resistance into the interior of the town. Finding neither inhabitants nor opponents, he returned to his corps, and the French advanced guard speedily entered the walls. They found the streets deserted. The work of destruction, begun by the French howitzers, had been completed by the voluntary sacrifice of the inhabitants, who had fled with the retiring corps of their countrymen; and the invading columns, in all the pomp of military splendour, traversed in silence a ruined city, filled only with smoking walls and dying men. Never did the horrors of war appear in more striking colours than to the French troops as they entered that devoted city. Almost all the houses were consumed, or in ruins; dying soldiers or citizens encumbered the streets; a few miserable wretches were alone to be seen ransacking the yet smoking remains, for any relics of their property which might have survived the conflagration. In the midst of this scene of woe, the cathedral and churches which had withstood the flames alone offered an asylum to the unfortunate inhabitants; while the martial columns of the French army, marching in the finest order to the sound of military music through the wreck occasioned by their arms, afforded a grand and imposing spectacle. So skilfully, however, had the Russian retreat been managed, that the magazines in the town had all been destroyed; the wounded, and great part of the inhabitants, withdrawn; and the

bridges over the Dnieper broken down, amidst the horrors of the nocturnal conflagration following that dreadful day, leaving naked walls, and the cannon which mounted them, as the only trophy to the conqueror."

This worthless acquisition had been acquired by the French with a loss of fully 15,000 men. In the battle of Valentia, which followed immediately after, they lost 8000 more ; but these were trifles compared with the terrible results which the reports of the hospitals and commissariat disclosed : "Typhus fever and dysentery, the well-known attendants on military suffering, had everywhere broken out in the most alarming manner, and swept off thousands in all the great hospitals of the army. Wilna and Witepsk were converted into vast charnel-houses, where contagion completed the unfinished work of human destruction ; and even the spacious convents of Smolensko, which had not suffered from the flames, were incapable of containing the multitudes of wounded who had been disabled under its walls. Such was the accumulation of corpses around the ramparts of that city, that they exceeded all that the strength of the survivors could bury ; and the smell which they diffused in every direction gave rise to a frightful epidemic, which in the end proved more fatal to the troops than the sword of the enemy. All the cottages in its environs were filled with wounded soldiers, both French and Russian, who, crowded together often without either straw or provisions,

made known their existence and sufferings by the groans and lamentations which they uttered. Hundreds were forgotten, and perished miserably in the general confusion: the streets were blocked up by the endless files of chariots, bearing the sick and maimed, which incessantly traversed them; and such was the number of amputated limbs which there was no time to destroy, that they accumulated in bloody heaps, and infected the air with their smell."

Thus assailed alike by disease, disaster, and the direct losses of battle, the effective French army had been reduced to little more than half its amount; while the Russians were receiving constant accessions from the interior. But Napoleon flattered himself that Moscow and the richest provinces of the empire were now before him; and he confidently replied to the frightful reports of disorganization and suffering: "Peace is before us; we have only to march eight days to obtain it; let us advance to Moscow!" But Barclay was not prepared to abandon Moscow without a struggle; and he only waited a suitable opportunity to give battle to the invaders.

At this critical period the supreme command of the Russian armies was conferred by Alexander on General Kutusoff, who was already endeared to the Russian soldiers by his recent victories over the Turks; and who, though now upwards of seventy years of age, retained all his youthful ardour, though tempered by the caution of experience. On the 2d of September he took post, with his whole forces, at

Borodino, and on the 5th of September the engagement began which ultimately brought about the battle of Borodino. The carnage was terrific. A redoubt, in front of the Russian position, held by 10,000 men and twelve pieces of artillery, was ordered by Napoleon to be taken. On the following morning, when the 61st regiment passed before the emperor, he demanded of the colonel where the third battalion was: "Sire," he replied, "it is in the redoubt." Napoleon's commands had, indeed, been executed, but every man had perished in its accomplishment; yet this was only preparatory to the general battle on the following day.

The Russian forces engaged at Borodino amounted to 132,000, with 640 pieces of artillery. Those of the French numbered 133,000, including 30,000 cavalry, with 590 pieces of cannon. The battle which ensued has been characterized as the most terrible, and the most murderous and obstinately disputed of which history preserves a record. The Russians lost nearly 50,000 men in the killed, wounded, and prisoners; among the former of whom were the brave General Prince Bagrathion, Generals Kaitaisoff and Touczkoff, besides thirty-three generals of inferior rank killed or wounded. The French loss in available forces was nearly equal. Two thousand more were lost only two days after in an engagement with the Russian rearguard. At eleven o'clock on the 14th of September, the advanced guard of the French army came in sight of the deserted city of Moscow,

from which nearly 300,000 of its inhabitants had departed on their approach. The squadrons, as they came in sight of the city, shouted 'Moscow! Moscow!' and the army descended from the heights intoxicated with anticipations of triumph, where they were only to be driven forth to irretrievable ruin.

Scarcely were the French legions established in Moscow, where they looked forward to long-desired rest, than the sentinels posted on the Kremlin discerned the first outburst of the conflagration which was to lay the city in ashes. Soon the French army seemed reduced to a dissolute and drunken rabble, eager only for a share in the spoils of the doomed city. Meanwhile, winter approached. On the 13th of October snow began to fall; and at length that terrible retreat began which has scarcely a parallel in the horrors of ancient or modern warfare.

The battle of Malo-Jaroslawitz was fought around the town of that name, which was taken and retaken seven times during the desperate struggle; and when at length it was left in the hands of the French, it was only a mass of bloody and smoking ruins, dearly purchased by the loss of 5000 of the best troops. In reality, the results of this engagement were altogether fatal to the French. The Russians had now so effectually taken up their position, while the French were daily losing by death, desertion, and want of supplies, that they were no longer able even to choose the line of their retreat. They were compelled to fall back on the Smolensko road, and to attempt their

return to France over the depopulated and ravaged wastes already strewn with the bones of so many of their comrades. On the field of Borodino, to which they had to repair, thousands of unburied skeletons met their eyes, and filled them with a gloomy sense of the fruitlessness of the terrible sacrifice. "On arriving at Borodino," says Labaume, "my consternation was inexpressible at finding the 20,000 men who had perished there yet lying exposed. In one place were to be seen garments yet red with blood, and bones gnawed by dogs and birds of prey; in another were broken arms, drums, helmets, and swords." The soldiers shudderingly averted their faces, and hastened past the frightful Golgotha. But even more terrible than the remains of their comrades in arms, was the woeful spectacle that awaited them beyond. "In passing the great Abbey of Kolotskoi, the army received a lamentable addition to its numbers in a multitude of wounded men, who had escaped from that scene of horror to join their retreating companions. Thousands had perished in the hospital from the total inadequacy of the means of relief to the prodigious accumulation of wounded who had been left; but a greater number than could have been expected had been saved, in consequence of the heroic and skilful efforts of the French surgeons. These miserable men crawled to the side of the road, and, with uplifted hands and lamentable cries, besought their comrades not to leave them to the horrors of famine or the fury of the enemy. At the distance

of two leagues from Mojaisk, 500 of these unhappy wretches had collected round a deserted barn: for several days they had received no food: an officer and twenty-five men were on the spot to guard them, and two surgeons were in attendance to dress their wounds; but the former had no food to give them, and the latter no linen or salves to apply to their mangled limbs. Napoleon made the greatest efforts to get them the means of conveyance; but the troops, whom misery had already begun to render selfish, murmured at displacing the spoils of Moscow by their bleeding companions, and could with difficulty be constrained to give them a place in their chariots."

The retreat, indeed, already began to assume the aspect of a flight. Ammunition waggons were blown up, cannon abandoned, and horses slain to furnish food for the hungry multitudes; while the hideous selfishness which the demoralising scenes of the campaign had engendered was seen not only in the waggon-loads of useless spoil still dragged on, while wounded comrades were left behind, but the sordid wretches even murdered the wounded, in order to lighten the load which otherwise they feared to lose.

Clouds of Cossacks hung on the rear of the retreating army, or awaited their movements in front or flank. Whoever strayed from the columns, or fell behind from fatigue or disease, became their immediate prey; and, at the crossing of the great rivers, the carnage and destruction became frightful. The Russians, it is believed, might have repeatedly driven

them to total rout by a well-timed engagement ; but their commander knew well what the severity of the winter would speedily effect, without the necessity of risking his men.

The anticipations of the Russian general were abundantly verified. "The weather," says Alison, "though cold and frosty at night, had hitherto been clear and bright during the day ; and the continued, though now level and powerless sun, had cheered the hearts of the soldiers. But on the 6th November the Russian winter set in with unwonted severity. Cold fogs first rose from the surface of the ground, and obscured the heretofore unclouded face of the sun ; a few flakes of snow next began to float in the atmosphere, and filled the army with dread : gradually the light of day declined, and a thick murky darkness overspread the firmament. The wind rose, and soon blew with frightful violence, howling through the forests, or sweeping over the plains with resistless fury : the snow fell in thick and continued showers, which soon covered the earth with an impenetrable clothing, confounding all objects together, and leaving the army to wander in the dark through an icy desert. Great numbers of the soldiers, in struggling to get forward, fell into hollows or ditches which were concealed by the treacherous surface, and perished miserably before the eyes of their comrades ; others were swallowed up in the moving hills, which, like the sands of the desert, preceded the blast of death. To fall was certain destruction : the

severity of the tempest speedily checked respiration ; and the snow, accumulating round the sufferer, soon formed a little sepulchre for his remains. The road and the fields in its vicinity were rapidly strewed with these melancholy eminences ; and the succeeding columns found the surface rough and almost impassable, from the multitude of these icy mounds that lay upon their route.

“Accustomed, as the soldiers had been, to death in its ordinary forms, there was something singularly appalling in the uniformity of the snowy wilderness, which, like a vast winding-sheet, seemed ready to envelope the remains of the whole army. Exhausted by fatigue, or pierced by cold, they sank by thousands on the road, casting a last look upon their comrades, and pronouncing with their dying breath the names of those most dear to them. Clouds of ravens, like the birds which are only seen at sea when a shipwreck is at hand, issued from the forests, and hovered over the dying remains of the soldiers ; while troops of dogs, which had followed the army from Moscow, driven to fury by suffering, howled in the rear, and often fell upon their victims before life was extinct. The only objects that rose above the snow were the tall pines, whose gigantic stems and funereal foliage cast a darker horror over the scene, and seemed destined to mark the grave of the army amidst the deathlike uniformity of the wilderness.

“The weight of their arms soon became intolerable to the least robust of the soldiers : their fingers fre-

quently dropped off while holding their muskets, and the useless load was thrown aside in the struggle for the maintenance of life. Amidst the general ruin, multitudes left their ranks, and wandered on the flanks or rear of the army, where they were speedily massacred by the peasants, or made prisoners by the Cossacks. But the troops now felt the consequences of their former licentiousness : the whole country, to the breadth of seven or eight leagues on either side of the great road, had been laid waste during the advance of the army, and the exhausted soldiers were now unable to reach the limits of their former devastation. By a degree of reckless violence also, of which it is difficult to form a conception, the first columns of the army destroyed, along the whole line of the retreat, the few remaining houses which had survived the march in summer ; and the rearguard, in consequence, suffered as much from the madness of their comrades who preceded, as the hostility of their enemies who followed them : fire was before them with its ashes ; winter followed them with its horrors. The horses of the cavalry and artillery, especially those which came from France and Germany, suffered dreadfully from the severity of the cold. In less than a week after it commenced, 30,000 had perished. Caissons and cannon were abandoned at every step : the ascent from a stream, or the fall of a bridge, occasioned the abandonment of whole parks of artillery. Famished groups threw themselves upon the dead bodies of the horses to satisfy the cravings of

nature ; and in many instances, even the natural repugnance at human flesh was overcome by the pangs of protracted hunger."

The horrors of the night fully equalled those of the day ; and thousands lay down by the watch-fire who never rose again. But the most frightful and appalling aspect of the whole was, the utter extinction of all the sympathies of humanity, produced by the desire of self-preservation, the lawless recklessness of insubordination, and despair. All mutual co-operation or friendly aid was at an end ; and so terribly was this manifested, that even a mother was seen to throw her own son into the snow and leave him to perish, when the burden of parental care seemed to lessen her own chances of escape. "All discipline," says Sir Walter Scott, even when speaking of those who still remained by the standards, "all discipline seemed gone ; the officer gave no command—the soldier obeyed none. A sense of common danger led them to keep together and to struggle forward, and mutual fatigue made them take repose by the same fires ; but what else they had learned of discipline was practised rather by instinct than by duty, and in many cases was altogether forgotten."

It is unnecessary to follow the French through all the frightful details of this retreat. But one incident culled from its darkest pages will suffice to crowd into a single episode all the terrible results of panic, insubordination, and violence, superadded to the usual

horrors of war. This was witnessed at the passage of the Beresina. This river seemed to lie between the fugitives and France, and to its banks had crowded the thousands of stragglers who still survived, mingled with the followers of the camp—women, and even children—who stood, in despair, gazing across the wide river, which the engineers were labouring to bridge, while the Russians were hard on their rear. The bridges once constructed, with trunks of pines and other rude materials at hand, crowds of baggage-waggon, carts, loaded wains, and thousands of fugitives on foot, flocked to them, impeding each other, choking up the passages, and hurling each other into the fatal stream. The greater mass of the helpless and wretched fugitives had still to cross when the Russian advanced guards appeared on the heights above, and began to fire down on the disordered mass. “It was then,” says Scott, “that the whole body of stragglers and fugitives rushed like distracted beings towards the bridges, every feeling of prudence or humanity swallowed up by the animal instinct of self-preservation. The horrible scene of disorder was augmented by the desperate violence of those who, determined to make their own way at all risks, threw down and trampled upon whatever came in their road. The weak and helpless either shrunk back from the fray, and sat down to wait their fate at a distance, or, mixing in it, were thrust over the bridges, crushed under carriages, cut down perhaps with sabres, or trampled to

death under the feet of their countrymen. All this while the action continued with fury; and, as if the heavens meant to match their wrath with that of man, a hurricane arose, and added terrors to a scene which was already of a character so dreadful.

“About mid-day the French, still bravely resisting, began to lose ground. The Russians, coming gradually up in strength, succeeded in forcing the ravine, and compelling them to assume a position nearer the bridges. About the same time, the larger bridge, that constructed for artillery and heavy carriages, broke down, and multitudes were forced into the water. The scream of mortal agony which arose from the despairing multitude became at this crisis for a moment so universal, that it rose shrilly audible over the noise of the elements and the thunders of war, above the wild whistling of the tempest, and the sustained and redoubled hurrahs of the Cossacks. The witness from whom we have this information declares that the sound was in his ears for many weeks. This dreadful scene continued till dark, many being forced into the icy river, some throwing themselves in, betwixt absolute despair and the faint hope of gaining the opposite bank by swimming; some getting across only to die of cold and exhaustion. As the obscurity came on, Victor, with the remainder of his troops, which was much reduced, quitted the station he had defended so bravely, and led them in their turn across. All night the miscellaneous multitude continued to throng along the

bridge under the fire of the Russian artillery, to whom, even in the darkness, the noise which accompanied their march made them a distinct mark. At daybreak the French engineer, General Eblé, finally set fire to the bridge. All that remained on the other side, including many prisoners and a great quantity of guns and baggage, became the prisoners and the prey of the Russians. The amount of the French loss was never exactly known; but the Russian report, concerning the bodies of the invaders which were collected and burnt as soon as the thaw permitted, states that upwards of 36,000 were found in the Beresina."

Amid all these horrors there were still some among the French army who retained their old heroic spirit. Marshal Ney brought up the rear, and saved his eagles when even Napoleon deemed his escape impossible. Nor were there wanting many individual traits of generous self-denial, though the general aspect was so little creditable to humanity. "In these moments of hopeless agony," says Alison, "all the varieties of character were exposed naked to view. Selfishness there exhibited all its baseness, and cowardice its meanness; while heroism seemed clothed with supernatural power, and generosity cast a lustre over the character of humanity. Soldiers seized infants from their expiring mothers, and vowed to adopt them as their own: officers harnessed themselves in the sledges, to extricate their wounded comrades; privates threw themselves on the snow beside

their dying officers, and exposed themselves to captivity or death to solace their last moments. Mothers were seen lifting their children above their heads in the water, raising them as they sunk, and even holding them aloft for some moments after they themselves were buried in the waves. An infant abandoned by its mother near the gate of Smolensko, and adopted by the soldiers, was saved, by their care, from the horrors of the Beresina; it was again saved at Wilna, on the bridge of Kawno, and it finally escaped all the horrors of the retreat."

The dreadful passage of the Beresina completed the ruin of the grand army. Soon after Napoleon abandoned its miserable remnant to make his way to Paris, where his presence was so much needed. Arriving in Poland, which had been reduced to absolute beggary and wretchedness by the exactions of the emperor, who had been esteemed its friend and destined liberator, he summoned the Abbé de Pradt to meet him at Warsaw, and demanded what contributions and men the grand duchy could furnish. "Sire," said he, "there were 85,000 Poles in your ranks; and now the country has neither men, money, nor credit left." It was indeed impossible that the system could continue; and the departure of their leader from the miserable remnant of his mighty armament dissolved the last tie which had influence over them. "The departure of the emperor, though a matter of congratulation to the troops, completed the disorganization of the army. The cold increased

in intensity as they approached Wilna, and at length reached twenty-six and thirty degrees of Reaumur, corresponding to twenty-eight and thirty-six below zero of Fahrenheit. The officers ceased to obey their generals; the generals disregarded the marshals; and the marshals contested the authority of Murat. The private soldiers, relieved of the duty of preserving the Emperor, forgot everything but the instinct of self-preservation. The colonels hid the eagles in their haversacks, or buried them in the ground; the officers who had hitherto marched round that sacred standard, dispersed to attend to their own safety; nothing was thought of in the army but the urgent pangs of hunger, or the terrible severity of the cold. If a soldier dropped, his comrades instantly fell upon him, and before life was extinct, tore from him his cloak, his money, and the bread which he carried in his bosom; when he died, one of them frequently sat upon his body, for the sake of the temporary warmth which it afforded; and when it became cold, fell beside his companion, to rise no more. The watch-fires at night were surrounded by circles of exhausted men, who crowded like spectres round the blazing piles. As the wood was consumed, they continued to gaze with indifference on the decaying embers, incapable either of rising to renew the fuel, or of seeking another bivouac; and when at length the flames were extinguished, fell dead beside the ashes. The position of these melancholy bivouacs was marked in the morning by the circles of dead

bodies which surrounded them, and attested the successive groups who, during the night, had been attracted by their light."

Out of 500,000 who composed the proper French army of invasion, not more than 37,000 succeeded in effecting their return to France; so that 463,000 men perished in this frightful campaign, in the brief period of five months. The whole annals of ancient and modern warfare leave the overthrow of so mighty an army, overwhelmed with such disasters, altogether without a parallel. In this disastrous campaign, Poland, as we have seen, bore a prominent share, buoyed up by hopes which were all in vain, and enduring sufferings as utterly unavailing for the recovery of her own rights, as for achieving the aims of the ambitious invader. The Cossacks, too, Poland's ancient foes, took a prominent part throughout the defensive and retaliatory warfare of Russia, until at length their flying squadrons hovered like the demons of destruction around the fugitive wreck of the grand army, and gave to thousands relief from worse miseries in a bloody grave.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MODERN COSSACK.

WHEN the Russian Czar Alexis, the father of Peter the Great, was laid in his tomb, in 1677, Russia dreaded the power and ambition of Poland; when Sobieski's death, only nineteen years afterwards, left Poland once more a defenceless prey to factions, the downfall of the republic had already begun. Bit by bit, Russia, Prussia, and Austria have advanced, checked only by the jealousy of each other; but ever ready to seize the favourable moment for further aggression, until at length we have witnessed the extinction of the republic of Cracow, the last fragment of the ancient kingdom, seized by Russia in defiance of every treaty and engagement.

Throughout that later period, the wild Cossack cavalry have ever been found on the side of Russia, the scourge of the Poles, and the avenger of the wrongs inflicted on their ancestors. When, in successive wars and revolutions, the Polish victims of Russian cupidity and despotism have been driven by thousands to the remote wilds of Siberia, the Cossacks have been the most frequent instruments of the punishment. Terrible, indeed, has been the requital of the wrongs which first roused the Cossack chief Bogdan to resistance and revenge; and which has awakened the sympathy of thousands in our own country, and

in France and America, on behalf of the Polish patriots, struggling in vain against such fearful odds for the defence of their country's freedom. Thenceforth patriotism has been a crime in the unhappy Pole, and even the suspicion of liberal sentiments has proved reason enough for consigning both men and women of noble birth to the dreaded exile. A work published in Russia, giving an account of the manners and habits of the Siberians, and the nature of the country, has recently been translated and published by Colonel Lach Szyrma, a Polish exile, under the title of "Revelations of Siberia, by a banished lady." In his preface, the editor remarks:—

"The subject of the work is Siberia; a region dreary by nature, and not only in name synonymous, but actually identical with, a vast prison—a locality associated in our minds with the most poignant of human sufferings. As such, it could only be properly described under the influence of those painful impressions, and while the writer is writhing under the most acute mental agony.

"The authoress of the 'Revelations' was one of the numerous exiles who are yearly sent to that desolate wilderness. She was a lady of quality, who had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of the Russian government; and, in consequence, was included in the class of the *nestchastri ludi*, or 'unfortunates,' as the exiles, in pity for their hard lot, are called by the people.

"With regard to her personal history, we need

only say that she is well known in her own country—a lady by birth and position in society—a wife and a mother, torn from her happy home. Her name is Eve Felinska, a name not less noble than honourably distinguished in Polish literature. Her husband's elder brother, who died some years since, was ranked among the most eminent Polish writers and poets. One of his best and most popular productions was the tragedy, named after 'Barbara Radziwill,' the consort of King Sigismund Augustus, supposed to have been poisoned by her stepmother, Queen Bona.

"Respectable by her family connections, and a gentlewoman of a cultivated mind, she could not but suffer the more bitterly when torn, on a sudden, from her domestic hearth and the bosom of civilized society, and carried off to the wilds of Siberia. Here, among a barbarous population, her very habits of refinement, as may be conceived, rendered her position more difficult and unendurable.

"As for her crime, it was that which the noblest and most exalted minds of every nation have ever been proud to commit—namely, the crime of patriotism. By her birth, descent, and education, a Pole, she could not but feel deeply for her fallen country and its oppressed people. Possessed of landed property, she established schools in the villages for the education of her serfs, and treated them with more than usual humanity—conduct that made her suspected by the Russian government, which suffers no educational

establishments but those that are sanctioned and carried on according to its own regulations. In addition to this, another incident seems to have rendered her obnoxious to the government. In the year 1837, some emissaries from abroad made their appearance in Russia, for the purpose, as was stated by the agents of the secret police, of bringing about a new insurrection in the Polish provinces. In this conspiracy, a great number of the first families in Lithuania, Volhynia, and other provinces, became implicated; and among them was our authoress. But in what manner, and to what extent, she was compromised, is not known; such matters never being divulged in Russia. To afford temporary shelter to the emissary on his passage, or simply to receive a letter from him, or from those who may have been in connection with him; or the casual knowledge of a vague rumour of what may have occurred in some other locality, and not reporting it to the authorities, suffices to implicate any one as an accomplice in plotting against the safety of the state.

“The dungeons of the citadel of Warsaw, and those at Wilna and Kiov, were, at that period, crammed with these unhappy victims of suspicion. Our authoress, and other ladies similarly compromised, were sent to a convent of Russian nuns at Kiov, where they remained many months, undergoing the most rigorous discipline that a fanatical sisterhood, especially if authorized by the government, can inflict on their sex. After a protracted

investigation, conducted with a barbarity peculiar to Russian courts, the whole affair ended by the two emissaries who had arrived from abroad—Konarski and Zawisza—being shot. They were both young men, pupils of the university of Warsaw. The rest of the accomplices in the alleged plot were sent into banishment to Siberia, and had their estates confiscated. Their lives were spared ; but each was subjected to the penalty of a death long drawn out, and to a fate from which all human beings shrink—death far from home, country, and friends.

“ Among those who were thus banished from Kiof, was Eve Felinska, together with two other gentlewomen—one an elderly matron, the other a young lady in her tenderest age, of a delicate frame, impaired by pining in prison.

“ These three gentlewomen had to make a most tedious and wearisome journey, during the inclemency of a Russian winter, to Siberia. On arriving at Tobolsk, they met a number of other exiles, their acquaintances and former neighbours, who had preceded them thither—indeed, a whole colony of their countrymen, who had been exiled at different periods. The Emperor Nicholas appears, in this instance, to have proved faithful to the threat pronounced by him after the close of the Polish war of 1831, that he would make a Siberia of Poland, and a Poland of Siberia.

“ From Tobolsk, the exiles were distributed, in accordance with the supposed culpability of each, among the different penal settlements in Siberia.”

When years had passed over the weary exile's head, and hope long deferred had made the heart sick, she was at length included in a pardon, extended to many such victims of despotic power, on the occasion of celebrating the marriage of the heir-apparent to the crown. Her book necessarily contains no such Siberian revelations as communicate to us any light on the secrets of the prison-house, for it had to undergo the censorship of the Russian police; and, innocuous as it is, the wonder is that it was allowed to appear at all.

An extract from her pages will exhibit the Cossack patrols of Siberia engaged in the performance of a singular and novel duty. Speaking of her residence at the town of Berezov during October, when daylight lasts somewhat less than three hours, the authoress remarks :—

“The three hours of day passed so quickly as to be scarcely perceptible; but the nights were drawn out to an immense length, and proved the more irksome from our want of all means of computing the hours. The town of Berezov, in fact, has no clock whereby the hours of the day may be ascertained, or the daily occupations of the citizens regulated, as is usual elsewhere. There exists, indeed, an hour-glass, called the *clepsydra*, at the police office; but this ancient means of measuring time is but of little avail to the generality of the inhabitants, and was most imperfect in its operation. To those of my readers who may not have seen, and will, perhaps, never see such a

primitive time-piece, it may not be out of place to give a short description of this instrument. It was composed of a pair of oblong glasses, the thinner extremities of which joined each other; and had a small opening in the middle, as a passage of communication. One glass was filled with sand, and turned upward, so that the sand it contains may gradually run through the aperture at the bottom into the glass beneath, which is empty. The quantity of sand is measured for an hour; and it takes just half an hour running from the glass above into that below, and *vice versa*. A Cossack is placed as a sentry to watch it, with the injunction, when the sand has run, to turn the glasses, so that the sand may, in turn, pass from the replenished glass into the empty one. In this way the hour-glass, after being turned twice, measures one hour; which being observed by the Cossack on duty, he is bound to run directly to the church, and give as many strokes on the bell as there are hours.

“Such a singular mode of notifying the hours must, of course, be liable to great irregularities. Any negligence on the part of the Cossack in turning the glass at the nick of time, however trifling, will, ere long, throw the computation of time completely out of order.”

We have hitherto referred chiefly to the Cossacks of the Ukraine, whose early collision both with the Tartars, the Turks, and the Poles, gives them a prominence in the history of these singular tribes. But,

besides the Cossacks of the Ukraine, Siberia has her own Cossack tribes, and those both of the Don and the Black Sea preserve their distinctive characteristics, and are kept in active service as a part of the standing army of Russia, singularly combining the elements of feudal military service most characteristic of Europe in the middle ages, with the most formal features of the modern system of military tactics.

Of these different Cossack tribes, Mr. Bremner gives the following account, in his "Excursions in the Interior of Russia," when noticing his detention at Krementchoug, a district town of Pultava, situated on the Kagamlik, close by its junction with the Dnieper: "While we are detained at this the last town of the only tribe of the Cossacks which we had any opportunity of visiting, let us hold some gossip regarding the other branches of that interesting race.

"Beginning with the Cossacks of the Don, the most powerful of all the tribes that bear this warlike name, we find that they are a perfectly distinct race from those among whom we have been travelling. The form of government which prevails amongst them is also quite different from that of all the other members of the great Russian family. They acknowledge the Emperor of Russia as their sovereign, but neither pay him taxes nor receive his laws. They render him military service, but retain the old names and the old forms of their primitive institutions. Their country lies to the east of the Ukraine, with which it borders at one point, whence it spreads away

along the government of Ekaterinoslaf, which forms the rest of its western boundary—the Nogaï Steppes in the Taurida, and the Sea of Azoph, forming its south-west—the government of Circassia its south-east—that of Astrakkan its eastern, and those of Voronezh and Saratoff its northern frontiers. The territory covers 3611 geographic square miles. Except along the banks of the Don and in the north, as well as towards the Caucasian range, which sends some shoots into it near Lake Bolskoi, their country is a complete flat. On the banks of the larger rivers many fertile tracts occur; but a great part of the surface is covered with steppe-land, on which little but pasture is seen. A large proportion of the people live by agriculture, in which, however, they are not very skilful. Some occupy themselves with gardens, some with the rearing of bees, some with the preparation of caviar, isinglass, glue, and the drying of fish for exportation. A very numerous portion occupy themselves with what has usually been considered the only industry of the province—the rearing of cattle. Horses thrive so well in the wide steppes, that in no part of the world perhaps may so many be seen as there. Though strong and active, however, the true Cossack horse is not a handsome animal; he is small, very long necked, and narrow behind, altogether presenting a hungered look; but put him to his mettle, and few will be found more fleet or more hardy.

“The population is not so numerous as their warlike fame would lead us to suppose. The returns for 1832

make it only 512,570, including gipsies, Nogaï, Armenians, and Greeks, as well as 16,413 Kalmucks, who are worshippers of the Dalai-Lama, and lead a wandering life, living in rude skin-tents, with camels, cattle, sheep, and horses browsing around them, all of which they rear with great success. A considerable part of the Russian light cavalry is supplied by the Kalmucks.

“The Cossacks of this tribe are, in general, of the Greek religion, and hold the Kalmucks in great horror. The dignity of hetman no longer exists as a local title amongst them, nor any other of the tribes. Catherine II. deposed Count Razoumoufsky, the last chief of the Ukraine; and the present Emperor has transferred the title of Hetman of the Don to his eldest son. ‘The population,’ says Schnitzler, ‘is divided into two cities, and 119 *stanitza*, or assemblages of houses and families, varying from 50 to 309 houses each, arranged in unpaved streets, and surrounded by a kind of rampart and ditch; the *khutors* or stables are outside. The country is governed in a manner entirely different from that of the Russian governments. At one time the Cossacks formed a democracy, with an elective chief, whose powers were very limited; but this democracy became, by degrees, an aristocracy; the assemblages of the *stanitza*, long preponderant, lost their rights; and the influence of the council-of-war at St. Petersburg increased. The Emperor reserved to himself the nomination of the chief, whose authority from that time became more firm and

more active. At present, all power is vested in the chief called *voiskovoiataman* (this is the dignity which the heir-apparent now holds), and, in his absence, in the *nakaznii-ataman*, or vice-ataman. They are divided into *polks* or regiments, and *sotnes* or companies, which are again subdivided into sections of fifties and tens. Each polk has a standard-bearer, and an *iessaoul* or major.'

"The Cossacks of the Don are free from taxes of every kind (this exemption is not enjoyed by the Kalmucks); but in return, all, from the age of fifteen to fifty, are liable to serve the Emperor; each individual dressing, equipping, and arming himself solely at his own expense. They keep 2,500 cavalry in constant readiness for service, but, in case of need, can easily equip twice that number; and, if called upon, every man capable of bearing arms must serve. They have pay only when in active service, or on the Russian frontier; but government supplies them with field-equipage. The principal weapon of the Cossack is the long and formidable lance. He carries also a sabre, a musket, and a pair of pistols; nor must the *natraika*, or hard whip, be forgotten, for it is used against his foe as well as his own steed. At home, the Don Cossack dresses very showily—in a blue jacket lined with silk, and edged with gold lace, silk vest and girdle, ample white trousers, and a large cap of black wool, with a red bag floating behind. But the soldiers dress in a short Polish jacket, wide dark blue trousers, and a huge sheep-skin cap. The

chin is always adorned with a long black beard, peaking out before; the hair of the head is cut short. Their women have very agreeable features, and dress in open silk tunic, wide trousers, and yellow boots.

“ Without entering on a minute consideration of the circumstances of the other Cossack tribes, it may be stated generally, that, besides minor divisions, there are in all four great tribes of Cossacks in the Russian dominions : those of the Ukraine, those of the Don, those of the Black Sea (who, from their vicinity to the Caucasus, are almost constantly in active service), and those of Siberia. All of these appear to have had the same origin, having spread from Little Russia, where the Cossacks arose on the downfall of the Tartar dominion. Their language is chiefly Little Russian, with a mixture of Polish, and, some say, of Turkish words ; but it would be difficult to say from what race they originally sprung. In all probability they were a mixture of Little Russians, who formed the great bulk of the hordes, with Kalmucks, gipsies, Tartars, fugitive Poles, and adventurers of all nations, who united to fight for independence, now against Turk, and now against Muscovite.”

It seems to be altogether beyond question that, ethnologically, the Cossacks have no unity. They are, like the “broken freebooters” of the Scottish borders, a union of wanderers and outlaws from all the surrounding countries, without any law or head, but associated together by common interests and necessities, and gradually acquiring distinctive manners

and a nationality of their own, in the process of adaptation to the new circumstances in which they were placed. As might be expected, the allegiance rendered by such free nomades to the Russian emperors has not always partaken of the implicit obedience to which they are accustomed from docile serfs and slavish nobles. They looked on the Russians more as protectors and allies than as masters, and, on several occasions, resented the interference of the emperors by throwing off their allegiance. In 1708, when Charles XII. advanced to the Ukraine, only those of the Setcha, a stronghold built on the Island of Kovletzkoi, near the mouth of the Dnieper, remained faithful; and Peter the Great having visited the offenders with the weight of his severity, the whole body joined the Khans of the Crimea. There, however, they probably found other burdens no less grievous, and, under the Empress Anna, they voluntarily returned to their Russian allegiance. Later feuds and grievances have been resented by them in a similar manner, but the meshes of Russian policy have been gradually surrounding the wild Cossacks of the Ukraine and the Don, and bringing them into permanent subjection to their Russian masters. After one of their insurrectionary resistances, Bremner remarks: "The Empress Catherine caused their Setcha to be destroyed, reduced the regiments of the Ukraine to the form of ordinary troops, and banished the Zaporoghes to Taman, where they founded the tribes now known as the Cossacks of the Black Sea. By degrees, how-

ever, the Cossacks who remained on the Don regained their possessions and privileges; and now for a hundred years they have been faithful and useful auxiliaries to their Russian protectors. The Cossacks of Siberia are sprung from a colony from the Don, which fled under Yermak, in 1549, when the Cossacks had been temporarily subdued by the Muscovites."

To these we may add other notices of the modern Cossacks, showing how these warlike nomades conduct themselves amid the scenes of modern warlike manœuvres and struggles, and by what system they are being gradually moulded into an arm of the regular standing army of Russia. During Sir Walter Scott's visit to Paris in 1815, he had an opportunity of judging of the wild warriors of the Ukraine, among the strange scenes of Parisian civilization, and his description of them has been recognised by more experienced observers as equally vivid and complete. "The natives," he remarks, in his *Life of Napoleon*, "on the banks of the Don and the Volga hold their lands by military service, and enjoy certain immunities and prescriptions, in consequence of which each individual is obliged to serve four years in the Russian armies. They are trained from early childhood to the use of the lance and sword, and familiarized to the management of a horse peculiar to the country—far from handsome to appearance, but tractable, hardy, swift, and sure-footed beyond any breed perhaps in the world. At home, and with his family and children, the Cossack is

kind, gentle, generous, and simple; but when in arms and in a foreign country, he resumes the predatory, and sometimes the ferocious habits of his ancestors, the roving Scythians. As the Cossacks receive no pay,* plunder is generally their object; and as prisoners were deemed a useless encumbrance, they granted no quarter, until Alexander promised a ducat for every Frenchman whom they brought in alive. In the actual field of battle their mode of attack is singular. Instead of acting in a line, a body of Cossacks about to charge, disperse at the word of command, very much in the manner of a fan suddenly flung open, and joining in a loud yell or *hourra*, rush, each acting individually, upon the object of attack, whether infantry, cavalry, or artillery; to all of which they have been in this wild way of fighting formidable assailants. But it is as light cavalry that the Cossacks are perhaps unrivalled. They and their horses have been known to march one hundred miles in twenty-four hours, without halting. They plunge into woods, swim rivers, thread passes, cross deep morasses, and penetrate through deserts of snow, without undergoing material loss, or suffering from fatigue. No Russian army with a large body of Cossacks in front can be liable to surprise; nor, on the other hand, can an enemy surrounded by them ever be confident against

* This is only partially true; they are paid, as has been already stated, like a militia, while on active service.

it. In covering the retreat of their own army, their velocity, activity, and courage, render pursuit by the enemy's cavalry peculiarly dangerous; and in pursuing a flying enemy their qualities are still more redoubtable. In the campaign of 1806-7, the Cossacks took the field in great numbers, under their celebrated hetman, or ataman, Platoff, who, himself a Cossack, knew their peculiar capacity for warfare, and raised their fame to a pitch which it had not attained in former European wars."

How far the characteristics of wild warrior tribes can be retained along with the systematic musters and military subordination of a modern standing army, has yet to be seen. The character of so large a portion of Russia, as consisting of vast uncultivated steppes, fit only for roaming herds of wild cattle, will, doubtless, afford facilities for the preservation of their native habits by the Cossacks, in a way that their drafting into any other standing army of Europe would render impossible. Even in Russia, however, it seems scarcely possible that two things so irreconcilable as the undisciplined, nomade habits of the free wandering Cossack, and the subordination and methodic formality of modern military tactics, should thus be attempted to be combined, in however partial a degree, without detracting from the true characteristics of the Cossack light cavalry. If, indeed, the observations of some recent travellers are to be relied upon, the present Emperor would seem to be desirous of obliterating all the essential

characteristics of the true Cossacks, and reducing their regiments of light cavalry to as monotonous a military uniformity as has been done in our own country with the old Highland regiments, which now retain little of their original Celtic character except the kilt and the bagpipes !

Elliott, in his "Letters from the North of Europe," describes a review which he witnessed near Sophea, a little town on the high road from St. Petersburg to Moscow. Thirty thousand troops were assembled to go through the manœuvres of a mock fight. "Their volleys," says he, "were fired with an irregularity which would disgrace an awkward squad; otherwise, as far as a civilian can judge, the duties were performed in a soldierlike manner. The scene was highly animating, and very opportune, as affording me a sight of a Russian army.

"The Hussars and Cossacks wore a peculiarly martial appearance. To the disappointment of a foreigner's curiosity, the latter have been disrobed of their national costume, and vacancies in their troops have been supplied indiscriminately with native-born Russians. They are now distinguished from European Lancers chiefly by the length and weight of their spears, and by the skill with which they wield them."

The old military service rendered by the original tribes, in Siberia and the Caucasus as well as throughout the southern borders of Russia, is likely long to continue little affected by such interfusion of foreign

levies, notwithstanding their being embraced within the system of Russian tacticians and military martinetts. Bremner states that, "since the year 1831, when the Emperor re-established the regiments of the Ukraine, under the name of the Cossacks of Little Russia, the Cossacks altogether furnish no fewer than 164 regiments of cavalry, consisting of 101,760 men. Of these, seventy regiments of the line, and nineteen of the guards, are furnished by the Don Cossacks; twenty-one line, and one of the guard, by those of the Black Sea; eighteen line, by those of Little Russia; thirty by those of Siberia; and the rest from Cossacks of the Ural, Upper Terek, and the Volga.

"One of the privileges of which the Cossacks most proudly boast is, that no recruit belonging to any of their tribes can be chained when on march to headquarters, as the Russians are; nor is it allowed to examine his person. In general, they may be regarded as far superior to the Russians, from their independence of spirit and their free form of government. The higher classes (*starchines*) receive an excellent education; but taking the whole government of the Don Cossacks, the average of scholars is not very high, there being only about one at school out of every 580 inhabitants. Some authorities state, that three years is the period of service required of each Cossack, and that they serve from the age of eighteen to forty: others, more correctly, say four years, and that the age of service is from fifteen to

fifty. This applies, however, only to a time of peace; for, in case of war, there is no limit to the period of service; all under the age of fifty must march, leaving only the old at home.

“That a change of circumstances can change the character of a people, is a fact which has held true in all ages. In no instance has it ever been more strongly confirmed than by the Cossack. At home he is the best-natured being in the world. We have seldom seen a more quiet, friendly creature. He seems fit to think of nothing but his fields and his poultry. One who knew nothing of him but from travelling through the district which we visited, would be almost tempted to call him soft and childish. But follow him to the battle—see him even in a march at the head of an invading army—and the Cossack will be found a very different being. He is no longer the quiet, unobtrusive husbandman, but the bold marauder—the true member of the fiercest of all the hordes which Russia can bring in countless swarms against Europe—in fact, the reckless adventurer, whose character has been so well embodied by Beranger in his noble ode, when he paints him hastening a second time to the banks of the Seine, and disdainfully addressing his steed:—

‘Efface, efface, en ta course nouvelle,
Temples, palais, mœurs, souvenirs, et lois.
Hennis d’orgueil, ô mon coursier fidèle,
Et foule aux pieds les peuples et les rois.’

“Nor is it merely in the field that the fierceness of


the Cossack soldier is seen; we have only to watch him doing duty as a policeman in a Russian crowd, pelting right and left with his heavy whip, and some idea will be formed of the character he displays in war. The very touch of the uniform seems to change his nature. Fortunately, however, he assumes his inoffensive character the moment the drill jacket is thrown aside. With his hand on the plough, he is once more our obliging friend of the wayside; his campaigning fierceness so completely forgotten, that he scarcely raises his eye to exchange a look with us as we pass his humble door."

Such is the Russian Cossack, in peace and in war; in the old stories of his early feuds and struggles with Turks, Poles, Tartars, and Russians, and in his later history, as a member of the vast system of Russian empire, and a tool in the hands of that despotic power for foreign aggression and domestic sway—a most singular example of the wild habits of the Arab or the Tartar nomade, grafted on to the civilization and methodic rule of modern Europe.

Mr. Bremner's picture of the fierce character of the Cossack as a soldier or policeman, may guide the reader to a conception of his probable conduct as the escort of Polish exiles to Siberia, the lineal descendants of those with whom the old Cossack hero, the terrible Bogdan Chmielniski, waged so fierce a war of retaliation in the seventeenth century. Dr. Hazy, of Moscow, indignantly denied the cruel treatment of the Polish exiles, as reported by the English press;

but all he could affirm when forced to condescend to precise statements was, that they were used precisely as other convicts: that is, that Polish nobles and soldiers, and even their wives and daughters, were treated no worse than felons of the lowest grade; that they were manacled like them; were committed to the absolute power of Cossack and other rude guards; and driven by such, thousands of miles, to their dreary prison. The late Sir William Allan, who resided for some years in Russia, and travelled through many parts of it, painted a fine though painful picture, which has since been engraved, representing the Polish exiles driven by their brute Cossack guards on their weary and hopeless journey—their bitter consignment to a living tomb.

In the year 1832, the *Times* newspaper published extracts from the journal of a native of Poland, who passed through various towns in which the unhappy captive Poles were on their way to Siberia. In these, the miseries and indignities heaped on men whose sole crime was their patriotism, would have been barbarous even if applied to the worst felons as an aggravation of sufferings to which they were condemned for their crimes. "At Wasil, a little town in the government of Nishnei Novogorod," the writer says, "I met fifteen officers from Volhynia, who belonged to the corps under General Dwernitzki. They are sent to Tobolsk on foot, to be there put as common soldiers in the garrisons. I want language to describe their misery: still their tears are less



consecrated to their own misfortunes than to those of their country. They hope for a Divine retribution.

“At Drakzow I met a large number of children between ten and twelve years old, mothers with their sucklings in their arms, and old men. Further on the route I met similar groups, consisting of one hundred souls and above: they are unfortunate families who fled for shelter to the forests of Lithuania, Volhynia, and Podolia; they fell into the hands of the Cossacks, and are now transported as prisoners of war. In entering the government of Mohilew, there are found on all the stations fortified and barricadoed houses called *ostrogi*. These disgusting, pestiferous, and dark huts, destined as quarters for felons condemned to transportation, are now crowded with victims of the insurrection, of every age, sex, and rank, and excite the most heart-rending sympathy.

“In the *ostrogi* of Kaluga there is now sighing young Gotthard Sobanski, with chains on his arms and feet. After having passed five years in this horrible dungeon, he is now to be sent off to the mines of Siberia for the remainder of his life.”

The same writer thus describes the scene he witnessed at Lipnow, in the government of Vladimir. “A singular and frightful noise heard from some distant spot excited our attention—it seemed as if it came from the bowels of the earth. It was that of 150 Lithuanian nobles, who were all chained and barefoot on their march to Siberia. The sentence passed on

them was, that they should be put as common soldiers among the regiments of the Caucasus, Orenburg, and Siberia. Shocking was the sight of the two young Counts Tyskiewicz, almost children; at every step they sunk under the load of their heavy chains; they stretched their hands for a little charity, in order that they might buy themselves chains of less weight, which their heartless keepers refused them.

“At Koupka, a village in the government of Mohilew, we saw about one hundred soldiers, all emaciated from sufferings and fatigue, without arms and on crutches, on their route to Siberia.

“At Choracewicze we met a detachment of between fifty and sixty soldiers in chains, on their way to Siberia. They belonged to those who, confiding in the amnesty promised by the Czar, and guaranteed by the King of Prussia, resolved to return to Poland (from Prussia). Many of them began to cry when they approached us; others tried to sing their national hymn, ‘Poland, Poland is not yet lost.’ Others exclaimed to us, ‘Return, return to our dear mother (their country); we hope still once to return again.’ On the other side of this town we met M. Warcynski, the marshal of Osmiand (the same town where the Kirgises murdered in a church four hundred wives, children, and old men). He was on a waggon with post-horses, under the guard of gendarmes; his hands and feet were chained to an iron ring round the body, which was fastened to another round the neck; his long beard hung down to his breast—the head

was shaved in the form of a cross—his coat half black and half white. He is condemned to hard labour for life.

“Bobruysk is a fortress in the government of Minsk. Six hundred soldiers of the fourth regiment of the line, of the Kuzah chasseurs, and others, are here working on the fortifications. They go in bands of ten, chained together to a long iron pole; the chains are only taken off during the hours of labour. There is also a noble Lithuanian of the name of Zaba pining here in a dungeon, and awaiting his sentence. He is accused of having intended to deliver over the fortress to the insurgents. When he was arrested, he had a list of the names of the patriots in his pocket. He tried to swallow the paper down. The sbirri tore his teeth open, lacerated the palate, and drew forth from his throat some few pieces of the paper.”

“The fate of those condemned to the highest degree of punishment is one of perhaps unmitigated misery—nothing can be more wretched than their condition. From the first hour after their arrival, they are engaged in the most laborious and unwholesome toils—in the freezing depths of the mine, or amid the suffocating vapours of the places where unhealthy chemical processes is carried on—shut up from the light of day, the breath of heaven, the sympathy of their kind. They not only lose goods and rank, but, by a refinement in cruelty, they lose their very names, that which marked them to be Christians, and

by which they were known among men, is taken away. Christian and family appellations are alike obliterated, and a *number* given in their stead, by which they are always called by the driver when he has occasion to address them."

Such are the terrible features resulting from that ambitious policy which has blotted out Poland from the map of Europe, and made it a crime for her children even to sigh after those old national institutions which, all imperfect as they were, contained in them the elements from which an enlightened people might have worked out a well-organized system, extending freedom to the serf as well as to the noble, and making of Poland either a constitutional monarchy or a free republic.



Part III.—Circassia and its People.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAUCASUS.

THE previous pages have furnished some materials whereby to judge of the rapid rise and the present power of the Russian empire, as well as of the character of its nobles, its officials, and its serfs. We shall now pass from the centre to the remote circumference of this vast empire, and behold it in its struggles for extended dominion and increasing power. The region of the Caucasus, which has been celebrated from the remotest times, and rendered interesting by many diversified associations, has received a new source of attraction in recent years as the arena of a struggle in which the Russian Emperor, with all the power of his vast dominion, has been foiled by a hardy race of free mountaineers.

In order fully to appreciate the nature of the Circassian wars, and to realize a distinct view of the scene where this modern struggle for liberty is now carried on, it is desirable that we should have some idea of the grand natural features of the country, as

well as of the character and attributes of the people by whom the unequal contest is waged.

The great mountain range of the Caucasus may be practically designated as one of the most important barriers between Europe and Asia. By this chain of heights the passage between the Euxine and the Caspian Seas is guarded as by a sleepless host of invincible sentries, and its numerous vales and alpine heights form the natural fastnesses for a race of mountaineers, where they may maintain the character for indomitable endurance which has marked the highlander of every age and country. The Caucasian chain runs from the Black Sea in a south-eastern direction to the shores of the Caspian Sea; commencing near Anapa, a Russian settlement on the Euxine shore nearly opposite to the Crimea, and extending a distance of six hundred and ninety miles in a direct line, or fully eight hundred miles in its actual windings, to Baku on the Caspian Sea. The spread of this great mountain range towards the north is pretty clearly defined by the courses of the rivers Kuban and Terek; the former of which flows along their bases westward to the Euxine, and the latter eastward to the Caspian Sea. The Kuban forms the boundary of Russia Proper, its lower branch separating the southern provinces of Russia from the Caucasian territory. The political boundary of the Caucasian territory on the south is the ancient kingdom of Georgia, now a province of Russia. It is thus placed between two portions of that gigan-

tic and still grasping empire, and, not unnaturally, its acquisition has become an object of the most ardent ambition of the Emperor Nicholas.

A country of a limited area and population, thus hemmed in between two frontier stations of the vast empire of Russia, and exposed on a third side to the assault of its Euxine coasts by means of the large armaments constantly maintained by Russia in the Black Sea, would seem destined to fall a certain and easy prey to its ambitious neighbour. Such, however, has not proved to be the case; and, when the peculiar features of the country are considered, the cause of this will be sufficiently apparent. The area inclosed between the two seas, and bounded by the rivers Kuban, Terek, and the Aras, or Araxes, which may be considered the natural limits of the Caucasian region, is not less than 100,000 square miles; but this embraces a part of Georgia, now belonging to Russia. Of the country occupied and possessed by the independent Circassians and their allies, there is very little level land, and what there is available for the purposes of pasturage and agriculture, consists of the lower valleys, like those which have for ages maintained the hardy mountaineers of the European Alps.

So little information of an accurate or trustworthy character has been furnished relative to this interesting country, it is not improbable that many readers may even now be inclined to think the comparison of the Circassian hill country with the Switzer Alps

as overstrained. Such, however, is by no means the case. The highest peak of the Caucasus attains an altitude of 17,785 feet, or more than 2000 feet higher than Mont Blanc. To this monarch of the Caucasian mountains which thus rears its lofty summit into the regions of eternal snow, European geographers have inaccurately applied the name of Elburz: a peculiarly unhappy designation, from the confusion it is calculated to occasion hereafter, as our information relative to Eastern geography is further extended. This name, derived, like many other geographical designations, from native authorities, by travellers very partially acquainted with their language, is a general term applied to all mountains which rise into the region of perpetual snow. It is already applied to a range on the south of the Caspian Sea, as well as to this peak of the Caucasus, and may be multiplied indefinitely on the same authority. To the Circassians this lofty central peak has ever been an object of sacred wonder and awe. It is deemed inaccessible, and its snow-clad summit is regarded as their sacred Olympus and Elysium. Numerous traditions and superstitious legends serve to authenticate, in the popular belief, the mysterious associations with the giant heights which shoot upwards into the visible heavens.

The native appellations of the monarch of the Caucasian range are derived from the popular superstitions regarding it; and in this respect the inhabitants of the region between the Euxine and

the Caspian Seas partake largely of the exuberant fancy and poetic sympathies by which the whole cast of Oriental thought is distinguished from that of Western Europe. The names applied by them are, *Djen Padischah*, or the King of Spirits, and *Mont Kav*, or the Mountain of the Blessed. They believe that the spiritual guardians of the unseen world descend on these mountain heights amid the clouds which frequently envelope them, and that these heavenly watchers preserve an impassable barrier against the sacrilegious tread of mortal foot within the supposed range or boundary which here divides heaven and earth. This superstition embraces all the heights of the chain which rise beyond the accessible altitude, and by the inapproachableness of their summits to all ordinary travellers, seem to give practical confirmation to the popular creed. The highest of these lesser summits are the Ali Guz, which is 15,000 feet, the Chag Dagh, another sacred mountain of nearly the same altitude, and Mount Kasbek, or the Mquirvari Peak, to which Klaproth has assigned an elevation of 14,500 feet. The sacred charm and sanctity of the last of these snow-clad heights has been broken by the enterprise of a Polish traveller, Dr. Kalenati, who was successful in reaching the top.

As the traveller approaches the south-eastern termination of the Caucasian range, another class of superstitious legends and traditional associations takes the place of those of the Circassian's holy mountains. Here is the sacred land of the ancient ghebirs, or

fire-worshippers, and once the favoured shrine towards which many thousands flocked to worship in the presence of what they believed to be the immediate and visible manifestation of the Divine presence. The burning plains of Baku are so impregnated with naphtha, that an inexhaustible supply issues forth on the slightest puncturing of the soil, and readily takes flame. Time, and the intrusion of foreign races consequent on the fortunes of Eastern war, have wrought many changes on the occupation and the creed of the old ghebirs' land. The visible manifestation of the Deity, as it was once regarded, in sight of which the devotee put off his shoes, as standing on holy ground, though still as palpable as ever, has not prevented the creed of Islam from supplanting that of the ghebirs. One religious establishment of the fire-worshippers alone remains, the Mesch-Gah, or Mother of Fire, a sort of ghebir monastery, tenanted by a small fraternity of this ancient faith, and surrounded by the blazing columns of inextinguishable flame, which, to the superstitious devotees, seem to shame the wilful scepticism of the Caucasian unbelievers.

The region of Circassia, or more properly Teherkessia, the largest and most important country in the Caucasus, is the northern slope and the valleys of that important mountain range; while the Kuban and the Terek separate the hardy mountaineers from the lowlands of the Cossacks, Turkmans, Nogay Tartars, and the Russian colonies in the Caucasian

steppe. Of the character and civilization of the Circassians, many confused and contradictory accounts have been published. By some recent writers they have been represented as "a highly civilized people, presenting—notwithstanding certain peculiarities, which at first view may appear a little startling to unaccustomed eyes—examples in the higher and nobler attributes of humanity, worthy of respectful imitation by the boasted nations of the West!" In these and such like terms the Circassians have been spoken of as examples of all that is most noble in a free people struggling for their liberty against an encroaching despot. By others a nearly opposite extreme is put forward. Macculloch, for example, in his *Geographical Dictionary*, after describing the Abasne, as the original natives of all Kubanian Circassia, now held by the Circassians by right of conquest, are called, remarks: "The Circassian princes are cruel and oppressive tyrants to their Abassian subjects, so much so, that the latter have in many instances sought the protection of the Russian government; but it does not appear that they are in any moral attribute superior to their taskmasters, since in every age they have been infamous for their robberies by land, their piracies by sea, and their reckless cruelties everywhere." Where authorities so widely differ, it may not unreasonably be assumed that the truth lies some way between the two extremes.

Among the travellers to whom we owe our know-

ledge of this interesting people, James Stanislaus Bell has furnished one of the most careful and intelligent narratives, while all his prepossessions are strongly in favour of the Circassians. A few extracts from his highly interesting journal will help us to form some trustworthy idea of the mountaineers of the Caucasus. He thus describes his first reception in the country, after having narrowly escaped capture by two Russian men-of-war. In accordance with Circassian custom, a sort of quarantine regulation required the seclusion of the stranger for a time, and he was lodged in the guest-house of a family, all the members of which were absent except one son. "The name of this family," he remarks, "is Arslanghaer. Though not wealthy, it is much respected; and my present host, a young man about twenty-eight years of age, is extremely attentive and gentle in his manners. He scarcely leaves me for a moment, and sleeps here for the greater security of my effects. Our meals are brought from the family-house, and he never eats till I have done. The hospitality of this people seems to be on a liberal scale. The night before last, Hassan, the companion of my voyage, came to visit me, and spent the night here. Last night we had another visiter, whom I somehow took for a brother of my host; but of whom I have this morning discovered he knows nothing, although he has lodged and fed him. On the evening of my arrival, my host, who is a rigid Mussulman, asked me if I drank wine or brandy. On my declining

both, I observed him send back a piece of cotton cloth he had brought from his house, with the intention, no doubt, of bartering it for liquor.

“ This part of the country has a beautiful highland aspect, and the coast from Anapa to Sûkûm-Kaleh presents, I am told, similar features—a continuous range of wooded mountains, with little valleys opening here and there. At this spot the hills extend to the sea in ridges resembling vast unbroken walls; but elsewhere they assume a conical, and, indeed, every variety of form. Almost all of them are clothed with forests, chiefly oak, to their very summit; and the trees are now putting forth their first tender leaves. The hills, as far as I can judge from a very hasty and superficial inspection, consist of a friable clay-slate; the detritus has filled the bottoms of the numerous dells with a deep and excellent soil, of which, indeed, the quantity of oak is a sufficient indication. The narrow valley of the Sûbesh, the mountain-stream on the banks of which I am at present residing, seems particularly rich, and is highly cultivated. Trees are numerous, and all the larger ones are festooned with enormous vines, from the grapes of which, I am told, many of the inhabitants make excellent wine and brandy. Low hills skirt the valley, clothed, where not under tillage, with fruit-trees, and a beautiful carpet of grass and wild-flowers. No houses are to be seen in the valley; they lurk in clusters in the wooded dells above, a consequence, probably, of the war so long waged on

this coast. Half-way up one of these hills, about a mile and a half from the beach, stands the cot I now occupy. I have an exquisite view from the green plateau in front, of the hills on either side, a part of the valley and the delta of the Sûbesh, and the sea beyond. The cottage itself, like all in this neighbourhood, has a thatched roof resting upon walls of strong stakes, hurdled and plastered inside and out with clay, washed with a white, or rather pale green colour. The floor, too, is of clay, and is carefully swept and repeatedly watered during the course of the day. At one end of the room (the house consists of but one room, with a stable adjoining) is the fire-place, a circular indenture in the floor, over which is placed a semicircular funnel, of about five feet diameter at the base, through which the smoke escapes. At one side of this fire-place is a small raised divan, well cushioned, for my accommodation; and the fire is constantly heaped with great billets of oak, which at present is very agreeable, as this is the rainy month, and, for the last two days, we have had torrents of rain, accompanied with a high, cold wind.

“One of the servants is a Russian, taken prisoner in one of the many vessels which have fallen into the hands of the Circassians. He enters my apartment—the door of which is kept open all day to admit the light—freely with the rest, and joins as freely in the conversation. He speaks highly of the Circassians, and of this family in particular, and says

he would be quite happy if he had only money to get a wife.

"The family have returned, and a change has already become perceptible in our meals, though unobjectionable before. This is owing to the more sedulous attention of females, by which I run a chance of being oppressed, unless I make good use of the horse, which is always kept ready for exercise. Fresh supplies of pasta and meat (either stewed or roasted), pasta and goats' milk, pasta, or Turkey-corn bread, with honey, are kept sending in upon me to satiety. I have had a visit too from one of the daughters, a very pretty girl, I am told, of about sixteen, with a bowl of nuts and walnuts. Unluckily I was absent at the time. We must hope that the visit was quite disinterested, for in candour I ought to tell, that the day before I had a visit from the daughter of a neighbouring noble, who is here on a visit (a very pretty girl, whose head and breast were profusely decorated with lace, and other ornaments of silver), who also brought a bowl of nuts and walnuts, and to whom I presented a pair of scissors. Both these young ladies eagerly desire to go to Constantinople to push their fortune, what we call being sold for slaves, and, with Allan's romance of a picture before us, think of with sympathetic horror.

"The father of this family, a very kind old man, overtook me yesterday evening, after sunset, in the valley, where I had lost my way amid the numerous little hills and pathways, and brought me home.

Soon after, he entered my house, sat down beside me, and said, 'You are my son, and this house is not any longer mine, but yours.' 'He has spoken truly,' said the son; 'for the first time I saw Yakûb Bey, I felt for him all the attachment of a brother.' I wished to know if the Circassians and the other mountaineers were now united, and if they sent each other reinforcements when wanted. In these respects, the young man says, they are as brothers, and go wherever necessity calls them; in proof of which he told me he has but lately returned from serving against the Russians on the banks of the Kûban. He reports that the Russians have lately attempted establishing an agricultural colony near Anapa, under strong military protection; and that the Circassians have succeeded in capturing some of the cattle and implements belonging to it.

"My room appears to be a favourite resort of the young ladies of my host's family and their visitors, who find attractions in my musical box, and other curiosities and sweetmeats. One or other of the old gentlemen generally accompanies them."

The danger incurred by Mr. Bell on his approach to the Circassian coast, was not more than he had been led to anticipate from previous experience. "The affair of the Vixen" is not yet forgotten. An opinion advanced by more than one organ of the English press in 1835, that Russia had no right to blockade the Caucasian coast, continued to gain ground. The practice of our own country in its

blockades has been so little guarded by any better considerations than those derived from the law of might, that it would be difficult to apply any very strict rules of courtesy to the proceedings of other countries. Mr. Bell, however, as an English merchant, resolved to bring the question to a practical test. He accordingly chartered the *Vixen*, a large English merchant vessel, for the Caucasus, and loaded her with munitions of war, as the most marketable commodity that could be offered to the Circassians. With wise caution and foresight, Mr. Bell did not trust implicitly to the general opinion of the British press, as to the want of right on the part of the Russians in defence of their blockades, although by that time the same views had been maintained in Parliament. To prevent all error or culpable responsibility, he wrote to the Viscount Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary, inquiring if the Russian blockade in the Black Sea was recognised by England. The answer returned to him must now be considered to have been evasive, or if not, it was most unadvised and mischievous. "No blockade," it stated, "was recognised by Great Britain, a notification of which had not been published in the *London Gazette*." As the blockade of the Circassian coast had not been published in this official organ, the answer appeared to be as explicit as could well be desired. The *Vixen* accordingly set sail amid the most sanguine anticipations of success by its projectors; as it seemed to them inevitable, that only

one of two results could now ensue, either of which would be favourable for the cause of Circassia. If, on the one hand, they were permitted to sail under the English flag, and dispose of their freight unmolested, the blockade of the Circassian coast was virtually at an end, and British traders might make their own satisfactory returns, while supplying to the brave mountaineers an abundance of ammunition and warlike stores, of which they had frequently found the want on very critical occasions. If, on the other hand, the Russians should maintain this blockade with unflinching rigour, and should seize the *Vixen*, Mr. Bell conceived that the immediate consequence must be the appearance of the British Mediterranean fleet in the Black Sea, to compel the abandonment of a blockade which it did not recognise, or else to annihilate the fleets and arsenals by means of which such outrages were perpetrated. Neither of these desired results, however, followed. The Russian blockaders did indeed seize the *Vixen* while in the very act of landing her cargo, but they conducted their proceedings with such moderation as to show their anxiety to avoid a collision with England. Notwithstanding such open defiance of their blockade, the officers and crew were liberated unharmed, and allowed to depart with the ship, its cargo alone being confiscated. Mr. Bell thereupon published the letter from the Foreign Office, under the assurance of which he had acted. The subject was keenly discussed in Parliament, and Viscount Palmerston coolly replied

to inquiries urged by Sir Robert Peel, that the entire question of peace or war between Russia and England depended on the decision of the law officers of the Crown, to whom the question of the right of Russia, in accordance with the law of nations, to institute such a blockade had been submitted. The law officers, however, decided that they had the right, and after no little abuse of Lord Palmerston and the other officials most directly involved in this international question, the affair of the Vixen was at length allowed to rest, superseded in public interest by newer occurrences. With Mr. Bell, however, it was otherwise. His predilections in favour of the Circassians were strong, and his personal visit to the Caucasus, to which we have referred, was undertaken in consequence of this untoward event. From his narrative, as well as from those of other recent travellers, we shall derive some interesting illustrations of the habits and ideas of this people, after we have glanced at the history of the Russian aggression which they have heretofore resisted with such gallant perseverance and heroism.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE CAUCASUS.

FROM an indefinitely remote antiquity the mountains of the Caucasus have been invested with a mysterious

and romantic interest. Some of the most magnificent creations of the tragic muse of Greece find there their assigned localities; and still older myths and sacred legends, as well as early historic records, contribute to the like striking associations with the lofty mountain range whose ramparts now opposed a barrier to Russian encroachments.

In the year 1829, the ambitious projects of the Emperor of Russia, which had been directed towards the long coveted prize of Constantinople, received a check from the same parties as have again been required to interfere on behalf of the Turkish capital and kingdom. This project of Russia, as more recent events abundantly suffice to prove, was only delayed, not abandoned, and meanwhile peace was purchased by the Sublime Porte by means of various concessions of more or less importance. Among these, one of the clauses in the treaty of Adrianople stipulated that the Sultan should cede to Russia the whole of the Caucasian territory, over which he had continued to claim a sovereignty sufficiently nominal to be relinquished without any great regrets. The bonds, indeed, of a common faith were strengthened by relations of mutual interest, and thus the exercise of some occasional powers by the representatives of Ottoman rule in the Caucasus awoke in the hardy mountaineers no degree of irritation or jealousy; but the practical relations which had bound the Caucasus to Constantinople remained unaltered by the nominal transference of the former to Russian sovereignty;

and the Emperor gained no more than a colour of right to give diplomatic sanction to the proceedings by which so nearly nominal a sovereignty should be converted into a real and absolute despotism.

The practical working out of this has proved a much more difficult problem than Russia had supposed; and there is reason to believe that not a few of her more wary diplomatists are now inclined heartily to wish that they had never meddled in such an attempt. There is something peculiarly humiliating, in truth, in the aspect of a colossal power like Russia thus arrested by bands of hardy mountaineers; and after employing armies such as seemed fit to cope with the most mighty forces that the powers of Western Europe could bring into the field, being compelled to retire with no better than a few empty bravadoes to cover the disgrace of outmanœuvring and defeat. Such events have not transpired in those romantic alpine regions of Asia, without exciting much interest and sympathy in our own country on behalf of those who have thus maintained a struggle for their national liberty, not unworthy to be recorded alongside of those of

“The patriot Tell, the Bruce of Bannockburn.”

The first Russian aggressions on the Caucasus took place in the reign of Catherine II., who, to improve the communications with her newly acquired Georgian territory, built a fortress, called Vladi-Kavkas, near the entrance to the Dariel Pass from the north, and at the same time established there that Cossack

colony which now bears the name of the Cossacks of the Caucasus. The policy of thus opposing to the Circassian mountaineers a numerous colony of wild, warlike freebooters, readily trained to mountain warfare, was worthy of the genius of the Russian Empress. This first step in the line of premeditated conquest was further strengthened by a chain of forts planted on the most suitable points along the whole border marked by the Kûban and the Terek. All attempts, however, to follow up these politic steps have proved unavailing, and the advanced posts of the Empress Catherine still constitute the boundary beyond which Russia has failed to secure any permanent footing. In 1806, indeed, Anapa, on the Black Sea, was conceded to Russia by one of those conventions which during the military career of Napoleon so frequently transferred districts and kingdoms from one power to another without the least reference to the inclinations of the people. In 1829 again, the treaty of Adrianople converted the whole of Circassia nominally into a Russian province; but the Caucasians laughed at the terms of this parchment transfer, by which the Sultan Mahmoud purchased peace for himself by signing away to Russia what never was his own to give. If the Russian Emperor can succeed in accomplishing the subjugation of the Caucasus, he may dispense with all such parchment titles to its sovereignty; and if not, the treaty of Adrianople is of no more value to him than an equal quantity of waste paper. This the Emperor Nicholas

is fully alive to, and steps have been taken accordingly.

Field-Marshal Paskiewitch, a soldier of experience and acknowledged ability, was appointed to "the government of the Caucasus," and an army of 100,000 men placed at his disposal for the purpose of converting his nominal government into an actual one. He found a further facility to his purposed conquest in the feuds and jealousies by which the tribes of the Caucasus were divided. Their union since against a common enemy has developed a vigorous spirit of Caucasian nationality, which has of itself gone far to render them invincible.

The plan employed by Field-Marshal Paskiewitch against the Circassians was precisely the same as the old Roman generals were wont to follow out when they passed beyond the Alps to subjugate the German and Gaulish barbarians of the Rhine valley and France, and by which they reduced Britain to a Roman province. Forts and military camps were to be erected along the whole Euxine line of coast. Those already existing on the banks of the Kûban and Terek were to be strengthened and increased in number, until the Caucasian range was entirely girdled by a chain of Russian forts. These completed, four military roads were to be opened up through the mountains, in addition to the great passes already existing; and the whole of these were to be, in like manner, guarded by chains of fortresses. By this means it was confidently believed

that all combined operations on the part of the Circassians would be prevented, and the real strength of their mountain fastnesses be as effectually destroyed as that of a fortress when its walls has been breached and its gates broken down. But like many other grand schemes, that of the field-marshal was more easily planned than executed; and while he was still discussing and preparing some small instalment of this comprehensive design, he was called away to take the chief command in the Polish war. With his departure nearly all active proceedings terminated; and the Russian generals left in command contented themselves with occasionally marching and counter-marching through the most accessible passes and border valleys, and issuing pompous proclamations, designed to impress the Imperial court with an idea of unusual activity. It could not, however, be concealed that nothing was really being effected; and at length the Emperor gave the command to General Williamineff, with peremptory orders to proceed with the plan devised by Field-Marshal Paskiewitch. Williamineff accordingly selected the proposed route across the mountains from one of the lower forts on the Kûban to Gelen-shik, on the coast of the Black Sea; and summoning together a force of 20,000 well chosen men, amply provided for the expedition, he set out at their head, accompanied with a strong park of artillery—an object of peculiar dread to the mountaineers. Selecting his points for permanent occupation as he went

along, his purpose was to erect temporary forts, with earth, timber, sods, and the loose stones scattered on the hill-sides, so as to afford a safe shelter to parties by whom the more permanent and formidable structures designed to replace them would be proceeded with. Thus it was anticipated that all combined action on the part of the Circassians would be effectually at an end; and the population of the Caucasus reduced to mere scattered tribes of predatory mountaineers retaining a precarious possession of the higher valleys.

The orders of the Emperor were to proceed with "The Pacification of the Caucasus," and General Williamineff entered on its accomplishment with the fullest confidence in his ability to do so. Mapping out the line of his purposed route, the general planned his victorious career, as it is so easy to do on paper! The sites of the proposed forts were determined on, and even the names for them adopted. Their accomplishment of the imperial behests was to be signalized by calling one of these military keys to the Caucasus, The Nicholaeff, after the Emperor himself. Another was to bear the name of Alexandrosky, and a third that of Aboon. Thus confident of victory, the Russian force set out, and made their way for a considerable distance on their purposed route without any formidable resistance. The Circassians seemed frightened into acquiescence and "pacification" by the very sight of this formidable body of invaders. Forces did indeed gather in

considerable numbers on the surrounding heights, but the Russian artillery mowed them down with their destructive fire, and seemed to open up a free passage to the invaders. In reality, however, they were only being decoyed deeper into the intricate defiles of the mountain fastnesses, where the brave mountaineers could cope with them on a less unequal footing. While all seemed still and passive around the defiles through which the Russian army wound its way, the summon to arms was flying from valley to valley, and signal answering signal from the heights above. Williamineff was flattering himself that his cannon had destroyed or put to flight all who had dared to oppose him, and that the greatest difficulties of his plan were already surmounted, and final success certain, when he was startled by the terrible jackal cry by which the Circassians summon one another to battle. The gorges of the mountains, and the tangled brake along the slopes of the valleys, rang with their answering shouts, and soon on front, flank, and rear, the rifle shots rained down, carrying confusion and death into their serried ranks. The Russians fell by hundreds, shot down as if by invisible hands; every ledge of rock, crevice, or projecting stone, and every bush and tree, concealed a Circassian rifleman, ready to deal death on the detested Muscovite invaders. After a vain effort to push on through the defiles, amid the roll of the Russian drums and the inspiring sounds of the bugle, the attempt had to be abandoned as hopeless.

The artillery could no longer be made available in their flying course between lines of deadly fire. Upwards of a thousand were taken prisoners. More than three times that number were left dead on the field, and the remainder owed their escape to the habits of the mountaineers, who, having seen them fairly in retreat, returned to their homes with their captives and booty.

This, which was the first great effort made to accomplish the conquest of Circassia, may be considered as characteristic of the whole. It was announced in the government gazettes as a splendid triumph! The banners of the regiments which had shared in the victory were ordered to bear honourable evidence of the part they had taken in its glories; and the general was congratulated on his exemplary chastisement of the rebels! Practical evidence, however, showed what was thought of the power of resistance possessed by these "chastised rebels." The veterans who had served in the Polish war were despatched to the scene of this dubious victory, and a force estimated by some writers to amount to 150,000 regular troops, in addition to the Cossack cavalry, was accumulated on the borders of Circassia.

By means of this overwhelming force something was effected. Forts were built, especially upon the western shore of the Caucasus, and by their means, with the co-operation of the Russian Black Sea fleet, that blockade was perfected which the owners of

the Vixen afterwards attempted to set at defiance. The effect of this sea-blockade was worse to the Circassians than all the invasions and attacks of the Russian army; its influence, moreover, on a singular practice, of universal prevalence as a national custom, cannot fail to strike the minds of most readers with surprise, in relation to a people for whom our interest is claimed as free mountaineers struggling for national and personal liberty. But this peculiar feature of Circassian nationality may fitly form the subject of a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE CIRCASSIAN WOMEN.

It is not difficult to acquire a lively interest in the cause of a free people chivalrously contending against the armies of a great despotic power for the maintenance of their national liberty. This fine ideal, however, with its romantic interest, is considerably impaired when we learn the position which woman occupies among these brave and gallant mountaineers. In this respect at least, they present no point of resemblance to the free mountaineers of Switzerland or the Scottish Highlands; for the beauty for which the maidens of Circassia have long been so celebrated is looked upon in no other light than as the means of augmenting their market value. This fact is undoubted, that a flourishing

trade has been carried on for centuries by Circassian fathers, brothers, and other relatives, with their own daughters, sisters, and wards; and that the weapons and ammunition with which they repel their Russian assailants have most frequently been obtained by them as the exchange in what is styled their "girl trade." This the Russian blockade of the Black Sea has greatly impeded, and the apologists of Russian aggression have sometimes tried to represent the Muscovite invasion of Circassia as a grand philanthropic movement worthy of a Wilberforce or Buxton. In offering such apology as may appear admissible for this barbarous system, we must bear in remembrance the influence which Mohammedan ideas exercise on the whole social and domestic habits of the people. Among themselves marriage assumes the character of a sale; but this is common to many people, and when it is further added, that no noble or free man can dispose of his child in marriage to any Circassian inferior to himself in rank, we shall not be thought to gloss over a barbarous custom, if we remark that such a marriage does not essentially differ in its nature from those so common among ourselves, when match-making relatives look for a suitable marriage for daughters. When young maidens are sold for the foreign market, it is otherwise; yet so differently do they view this revolting custom from what we should do, that they look forward to such as the avenue to promotion, and anticipate their being taken to Constantinople

as the introduction to a scene where their fortunes may be made, and they may become the ladies of Turkish harems. Many prefer such an opportunity of trying their fortune in the world to wedding among their own people. This is especially the case among the lower ranks, as they have thereby a chance of attaining to a social position such as they could not hope for at home.

The following narrative, recorded in Mr. Bell's interesting Journal, will serve to convey some notion of the rude ideas entertained by this people relative to the rights of woman and her position in the social scale, as well as of other of their customs. Writing at Shimtoatsh, on the coast of the Black Sea, he remarks: "Although shut out from the rest of the world, we have here no lack of information as to what goes on in our immediate vicinity, for my host—one of the wealthiest persons on the coast, and said to be worth about £6000—was wounded a few days ago, and his hamlet is incessantly thronged with large parties of his friends, who come to pay their respects to him in the guest-house, where, as usual on such occasions, he is laid in state to receive them. From fifteen to twenty persons usually remain in it all night, the greater part of which was at first spent in songs, dancing, and other merriment, for his amusement! those inside and an equally large party outside singing alternately, and sometimes in responses to each other. A ploughshare too, which lay by the divan, was now and then

smartly struck with a hammer, so that any continuance of sleep was out of the question, while a large fire blazed on the hearth to give light to this national folly, and all this beside a man with his pulse at about ninety. Some idea of the congregation of guests may be formed from the fact, that in six days there have been killed and eaten by them, five bullocks, one goat, and one lamb.

“First, in my capacity of surgeon, I got the singing and dancing (for which a party of young girls came each evening—only the serfs, however, among them performing) arrested, and then the rest of the noise gradually abated, till my patient was left to pass the whole night in repose. But I fear it will be long before these ridiculous prejudices are quite eradicated; for our host appeared to imagine he would be thought quite unreasonable, however ill he might be, to refuse to see persons who came from a distance to see him, while the guests appeared to think it equally unreasonable that they should be curtailed in the customary amusements of the *occasion*, which amusements they imagine to be also for his good; for the prejudice consists in the belief that the devil may do the sick man mischief if he sleep during the night. The iron ploughshare is placed at his bedside, to be struck three times with the hammer by each newly-arrived visiter, at the same time that he dips his fingers in water—in a bowl with an egg in it—and sprinkles it on the bedclothes. This is an expedient for averting the

'evil eye;' for which purpose also a line of *orthodox* cowdung has been drawn all round the inside of the walls of the apartment, and the Koran laid upon his pillow. Belief in the evil effects this eye may occasion is one of the ideas most deeply rooted among both Circassians and Turks, as being sanctioned by the Koran.

"*Shemitt* Urûtsûk-okû Islam, my present host, is brother-in-law to Hassan Bey, and it was at the earnest request of the latter and his lady that I came here to attend to his cure, in which my interest is somewhat abated since I learned how his wound was received.

"Among his numerous serfs is a Russian deserter, a Turk, or rather Tartar of Khazan—for his features savour more of Mongol than Turkish extraction—and his age may be about forty. Islam determined, however, that he should have a wife, and accordingly purchased at Makupse a young serf-girl, said to have been remarkably beautiful, and who, when brought to this hamlet, refused to be married to the Tartar, loudly protesting that she would never consent to be united but to one of her own countrymen—perhaps some secret one she had already set her affections upon. Be this as it may, Islam endeavoured to compel her by punishment, when she escaped from his tyranny by hanging herself. The girl and her sorrows were consigned to the grave, and probably not much more thought of; for Islam not long after returned to Makupse, when the bro-

ther of the girl—whose feelings appear to have been as powerful as her own—watching his opportunity, stabbed Islam with his dagger, and fled, and, I must say I feel somewhat satisfied in adding, escaped; for although the people here treat their serfs in general kindly, some of them appear to set their will in the case of marriage totally aside, reducing them in this respect to the level of their cattle, which must propagate for the benefit of their master.

“Islam’s wound, which is in the pit of the stomach, would probably have been mortal, but for another in the right hand, with which hand he so far averted the dagger. The forsaken Tartar gives a darker version of Islam’s criminality; but I believe it to be an invention of his self-love; for his master appears to be much respected, and to have his active and enterprising spirit fully engaged in his extensive commerce and agriculture. His age, moreover, is upwards of fifty: he lost, only last year, his wife, a very beautiful full-grown daughter, and five-and-twenty other persons of his establishment, by the plague; which heavy calamity has broken him down, and, as he says, brought gray hairs upon him for the first time; and shortly before this incident he had married again, in hopes of yet having another daughter.

“I shall close this long episode by an account of the payment for Islam’s wife, a widow of Abazak—a large party having arrived thence to receive it. First I saw handled, for two or three days, various

saddles and coats-of-mail, which usually form items in such a transaction; but these were rejected, and the day of payment having arrived, my host (only a fortnight after he had received his wound) sallied forth from the guest-house—dressed in a showy orange silk *anteri*, with six attendants, two before, two behind, and one on each side—to proceed to his own, and to look after the delivery of the goods in person; but whether this was occasioned by his fear that his wife might pay too high a price for herself, or whether etiquette required it, I cannot say. Two hundred pieces of merchandise (worth here about four shillings each), two serf-girls, and two horses, have been already given to the principal, besides four or five pieces each to some ten or a dozen attendants; and other two serf-girls and other six horses have to be given some time hence.”

On the general subject of the sale of girls, Mr. Bell thus remarks, in reference to an incident he witnessed while under the same roof: “Two serf-girls of this establishment, about twelve to thirteen years of age, have just been sold to a merchant going to Constantinople. Twelve horse-loads of merchandise have arrived in payment of them, a sight that sickens my British stomach, however it may operate on that of Islam. The girls have been here to kiss his hand at parting, on which occasion the hearts of both of them seemed greatly convulsed; and one with reddish hair (and keener feelings) shed floods of tears, which went nigh to set mine a-flowing.

Parting, however, is always painful, and I trust these two girls may be sustained by the ambition I believe to be common here among the youth of their sex—of becoming wives to nabobs of Constantinople."

Mr. Bell was, himself, offered the present of a female serf, as the fee tendered him for the cure of his host; and had he been willing to regard such a representative currency, he might have transferred her to the slave-market of Constantinople, and cashed her there for from eighty to a hundred pounds.

Mr. George Leighton Ditson, an American physician, who still more recently travelled in Circassia, thus refers to the subject in describing his visit to Anapa. In reading it, however, we must remember that he was the guest of Russians, and derived many of his ideas of the Circassians from a prejudiced source. "Returning westward," he remarks, "we doubled a point of land opposite the battery of Alexandrovski on the Tauride coast, then steered to the south, and then south-east along the Asiatic coast, and in a few hours were anchored off Anapa.

"This was one of the strongest and most imposing towns held by the Turks on the Black Sea, and was of vital importance to the Circassians; for the latter found here a ready market for their females, in exchange for ammunition and the means of carrying on their wars with the Russians. The women destined to fill the harems of Constantinople were brought here by their fathers and brothers, or came voluntarily, elated by the prospect of benefiting their condition.

The prices obtained for them depended very naturally on their youth and beauty—the latter qualification embracing particularly a form voluptuously developed, and for which they are usually remarkable.

“While the Turks held this place, the Russians were convinced it would be impossible to subdue the Circassians, and in 1828 they resolved on taking it. A fleet of thirty-two vessels under Admiral Greig, an Englishman, and a land force under Prince Meustchikow, were put in motion; and, after a fearful struggle and a siege of about three months, they succeeded in the object of their expedition. The loss on the part of the invaders was immense; ‘for,’ said one of the officers to me, ‘the Turks in fortified places fight with incredible energy, though in the field they display but little.’

“The situation of Anapa is on table-land backed by abrupt cliffs, and protected by a wall. Its commercial importance has declined by the will of its present incumbents. Its harbour is not remarkably safe; but this evil was partially remedied by the ancients, who built a long break-water into the sea, a considerable part of the foundations of which can yet be seen. The appearance of the town from the bay is not very attractive; but it is an interesting place from the associations one must necessarily attach to it, and as standing like a sentinel at the gate of a vast prison.

“To how many thousands of Circassian maidens has this been the bright surveying point of a brilliant

destiny! To how many, at least, has it appeared so, when after traversing the long, rugged ravines of the Caucasus, they have reached the summit of these neighbouring heights, and have gazed with throbbing breasts on the fair city below them! The vision of their childhood, the dreams of their girlish days, the aspirations of their riper years, were here about to have a form, a tangibility, a reality; they were to pass from a state of servitude, dependence, and perhaps poverty, to a life of splendid ease, of enviable independence, luxury, and love. Their bright eyes brightening with these happy thoughts, their beauty was enhanced; and few were those who were not bettered by the change. It would, however, be extravagant to say that none were disappointed. Some, doubtless, trusting by their charms to become the 'light of the harem,' the mother of a sultan; to be bedecked with the costliest jewels and wrapped with the richest robes; have rated their fascinations too high, and found themselves but the domestic servants of some miserly crones, who, while they made the arduous tasks of their gentle captives repay them for their cost, begrudged it while they toiled. Some, too, whom God created with nervous temperaments, and endowed from birth with refined, sensitive, delicate feelings (and there are such by nature among every people), led from their poor but happy hearthstones, and from the affectionate care of parents, believing that the world was all bright, and that the smiles and caresses of strangers would repay them

for the sundering of the ties of home—finding not a shadow of those warm and ardent sympathies of which their young souls were full, but encountering the cold, chilling realities of life, with which the mass by adaptation are to combat; some too, I say, thus endowed, doubtless have welcomed their premature graves, literally made desolate-hearted.

“Every one will naturally ask if this traffic has ceased. As far as Anapa and all other Russian ports are concerned, I am authorised to say it has. Yet I am aware that the transportation of Circassian maidens to Constantinople is a thing of almost daily occurrence, and cannot be restrained. Several hundreds on their way to the great capital, have been captured within a few years. These are probably a very small portion of the number who embarked. They were taken in Turkish vessels—the Circassians having none of their own—and were distributed as convenience dictated.


“In destroying this trade, the Russians have only one object in view, though their policy may appear as a sublime virtue—the *suavis* of humanity and religion; for it is generally supposed that these girls thus sold into slavery (as it is called), accept their bonds with the same anguish of heart as do the negroes of Africa; that in going to Constantinople they remain Mohammedans, whereas if they are taken by the Russians they will more readily become members, or their children will, of the Greek Church.

“The fact is, this bondage referred to above, and with which we associate all that is abject, degrading,

and heart-rending, in reality is divested of such features, and is in truth the fairest vision which floats before the imagination of these youth. The parents look forward to the time when their children shall be purchased and settled in Constantinople with precisely the same feelings, hopes, and anticipations, as the New England farmer and his family look on the promising son who goes to some great capital to become a merchant and rich man. The Caucasian parents have, too, the same reasons for releasing their children as those in America, who, though sprung from indifferent sources in the country, have made for themselves wealth and a name in the cities; the former, at various times, having been raised to the highest posts in the Ottoman empire. The mothers of the Sultan and of the admiral of the Turkish fleet are Caucasian slaves, and they receive all the honours due to their present exalted station.

“That the Russians save these captives from Moham-
medanism is true, and this doubtless would receive the highest commendation from the whole Christian world; but in other respects I cannot believe their condition is improved, though my most worthy little friend, Lieutenant Anrep, assured me, that of all those taken from the Turks, very few desired to return to their own homes, notwithstanding the offer was made to them; and they would have been allowed to go had they expressed such a wish.

“The policy of the Russians is—and it is wholly justifiable—to destroy this traffic so pleasing to the



Turks, who, in exchange for the fair commodity, supply the Caucasians with the arms and ammunition by which they protract the struggle with their Muscovite enemy. Were it not for this never-failing and very lucrative branch of trade, the means they now possess of prolonging interminably the war with Russia would soon cease, for their other resources are extremely limited."

It is thus apparent that writers differing essentially on most other points, give nearly the same account of this system of sale of daughters and sisters among the Circassians. It would be folly to attempt to disguise the manifest evidences of imperfect civilization, and the loose hold of social affections and the ties of the closest relationship, indicated by such a system. Yet, at the same time, it would be folly to insist on testing such a people by our own standard, or to assume that the Circassian maiden must view her departure for the slave-market of Constantinople in the same terrible light as an English girl, nurtured under our happier system of social and domestic virtues, would look on the prospect of being bought and sold, and her life destiny made to depend on the barter of a slave market, where he who sold and he who bought must be alike strangers to her, and indifferent to any wishes she may entertain.

The whole ideas of the Circassians in regard to woman are essentially opposed to those of western civilization. The death of one may be compromised by her slayer at about half the sum which the laws of the

Circassians admit of being paid in full quittance of the crime of manslaughter. The whole customs of salutation and greetings in like manner illustrate the Oriental ideas of man's entire supremacy, and the essential inferiority of woman in every respect; while on the border lands of the Caucasus, the traveller sees the diverse customs of the east and west brought into curious contrast, and indeed collision. "Here," for example, says Mr. Ditson, writing from Sympherapol, in the Crimea, "was impressed on our minds the glaring difference of customs growing out of modern civilization and those unvarying ones of the Orient. The Tartar woman closely veiled, smothered in her *ferredgé*, avoiding the intrusive gaze, and shuffling along in her yellow boots or slippers, stops astonished at the bold, laughing, open face of the Russian belle as she sweeps by in her gay drosky. If you follow the former, you will find her descending into some filthy, narrow lane, and after picking her way ingeniously along through the mud, on the tops of irregular stones which render it impassable for any sort of vehicle, will slip quietly in at a gate in a high wall, which conceals her home and her habits equally from the passer. The point of a tile roof, the top of a tree, and the climbing vine, may indicate perhaps a dwelling and a garden; but for these signs, one might consider himself walking in an uncovered cellar. The Muscovite lady ascends to the elevated plain, where broad streets, massive buildings, and armed soldiers, bespeak wealth and power. She

alights, and soon, through the open windows of an airy mansion, is seen whirling in the waltz with an *amant*, sipping tea in a family circle, or reading the last French novel. Which of these lives most tends to elevate our social condition, and which contributes most to the happiness of the sex, I will leave my readers to judge, as well as which he would prefer. One or the other will soon pass away."

In the Caucasus itself, the seclusion of the Moslem harem is tempered by the freedom of unrestrained mountain life, and contrasts less violently with the customs of European society; but whatever is there peculiar to the social manners and ideas of the Circassian mountaineer, will be adhered to probably as long as he maintains his liberty among his native mountain fastnesses.

CHAPTER IV.

RUSSIAN POLICY.

THE gigantic scale of the Imperial plans for the subjugation of Circassia, would seem to hold out little hope of its ultimate safety. When, however, we observe more closely this colossal power engaged in the actual struggle, we find its apparent giant strength to be in reality a mixture of "iron and clay." We have already seen somewhat of the proceedings of General Williamineff, and the somewhat lame re-

sults which followed from his plans for the subjugation of Circassia. The following record from Mr. Bell's journal of his residence in Circassia affords some insight into his further proceedings, and may throw some light on the causes which contribute to weaken the apparently overwhelming power of Russia, and to contribute to the safety of the brave mountaineers of the Caucasus. Writing in October 1837, Mr. Bell remarks: "Two Russian deserters, and a prisoner taken from Williamineff's army, have been here, and they inform us that the Emperor and his son, on their way to Tiflis, have been at Ghelenjik, where they arrived in a steamer, and remained only two days. They were there on Tuesday last during the gale; and, during their stay, a circumstance occurred which cannot, I think, but have results for this campaign favourable to the Circassians. Almost the whole of the biscuits and provender provided for the soldiers and cattle during the winter have been burned. How the fire originated we cannot learn; but the soldiers say that the general belief among their comrades was, that Williamineff himself had caused the biscuits to be burned, to prevent the Emperor seeing how his soldiers were cheated, by being furnished with bread mouldy and full of worms, and of which only half the just quantity per man was served out to them. These men say further, that the treatment of the soldiers of this army is so abominable, that they had resolved, if the Emperor asked them any questions, to have cried out with one voice

against it; but no such opportunity was afforded them. The fire caught also the house in which the Emperor was lodged; and when the soldiers were endeavouring to extinguish it, his Majesty said to them, 'Never mind, my dear friends, it is my misfortune.' Kind words and short commons! He and his sons did not sleep again on shore! They set sail for Redût-kaleh, and thence proceed to Tiflis. I presume they will return by Vladi-Kaukass, well escorted.

"Immediately after the fire, Williamineff and his army marched out of Ghelenjîk, for the purpose, it is said, of recrossing the Kûban, according to orders from the Emperor. They are said to be at present in Abun.

"When the news of the Russians having left Ghelenjîk reached this, some youths of the neighbourhood, to the number of six, made a party to go and have a shot at them. They returned on the evening of the same day, bearing the body of one of their number, a youth of eighteen years of age, who had just been married!"

The contrast thus exhibited between the determined resolution of the Circassians and their hireling foes, is sufficiently striking. They fear no odds, and are ready at any moment to arm against the invader. The dead bridegroom borne back to his widowed wife, is an incident such as the poet might turn to fine account in picturing the heroic defence of liberty in the mountain fastnesses of the

Caucasus; yet, from the very way in which it is told, we perceive that it was regarded as nothing extraordinary. An incident of a different kind, recorded by the same traveller, will help to throw light on the character of this people for hardy and indomitable courage: "Innumerable instances of individual bravery and heroism," says Mr. Bell, "might be collected: of these there is no want; although there is no appearance of a principle of combination by which greater and more permanent results might be produced. I should not give you the following instance, but that the greater part of the transaction was witnessed by several people who happened to be on the banks of the Kûban at the time; and that is an example of a desperate love of liberty, general among Circassians, of whom very few ever allow themselves to be made prisoners. A young man of Shapsuk, after killing or wounding several Russians in a late affair across the Kûban, was made prisoner and carried to Yekaterinodar. There he was questioned about, and frankly told, all the acts of hostility he had been of late concerned in, pointing out two of the soldiers he had wounded. He was threatened with death, fettered and thrown into a dungeon. But during the night he contrived to free himself from his irons, and to dig a hole through his prison wall, by which he got into the inclosure. This was surrounded by a wall and *chevaux-de-frise*, which he surmounted by grasping the points of iron in his hands and thus making a footing, from which he

leaped down upon the outer ground. Here he was encountered by two sentries; but snatching up a billet of wood that fortunately lay at hand, he felled one of the soldiers to the ground with it, escaped from the other, and ran towards the Kûban. On the way, three Cossacks attacked him, whom he kept at bay with his billet until he reached the river and plunged into it. His trials were not yet at an end, for some soldiers put off in a small boat in pursuit of him, nor would his diving have, in all probability, saved him, had he not succeeded in upsetting the boat. At length he reached the shore; but finding himself in Psadtûg—the people of which have made terms with the Russians—he was so fearful that they would capture and deliver him up, that he set off in the state of nakedness to which he had been reduced in his scuffles, towards his home, which he succeeded in reaching in safety."

There is often a fine chivalrous magnanimity displayed by the Circassians, which, added to their patriotic attachment to their mountain home, gives ample ground for the high opinions that have been expressed regarding them by enthusiastic writers. In the nearest valley lying to the north of Anapa, the inhabitants owe their chief protection against Russian aggression to an intervening range of steep hills, covered on their summits with lofty forests, and presenting precipitous cliffs to the sea. These barriers, however, have not prevented the Russians from repeatedly finding their way across the heights, to

plunder and ravage the hamlets. Watches, indeed, are kept, and every precaution taken against such inroads; but many of the proprietors of the border hamlets have been reduced nearly to destitution by these marauding incursions. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the plundered villages continue to cling to their native rocks and their mountain freedom. Karum Bati-Mirza, one of the chiefs of this district, lost nine hundred sheep in one of these forays, and was thereby deprived of the great bulk of his property. Yet, when the Russian general offered to restore them, on conditions which might have been honourably accepted, with Roman fortitude he sent back word that the general was welcome to them, as he had still enough for all his wants, and wished no favour from him.

Mr. Ditson, the American traveller already quoted, describes the brave mountaineers of the Caucasus as on a par with the Indians of his own native backwoods; and, influenced by the courtesies and representations of his Russian hosts, he seems to have regarded the attempt to enslave them, and reduce their country to a Russian province, as equally defensible and just with the encroachments of the American emigrants on the forest and prairie haunts of the Red Indian. "Prince Kotsohobey," he remarks, "took me in his carriage, and gave me some advice concerning my intended journey into the mountains, but spoke of dangers, which Baron Nicolaïf assured me I ought not to apprehend. Prince


Kotsohobey said : 'These Circassians are just like your American Indians—as untameable and uncivilized—and, owing to their natural energy of character, extermination only would keep them quiet; or that if they came under Russian rule, the only safe policy would be to employ their wild and warlike tastes against others.' I saw one of them to-day riding through the streets a steed as fiery as himself. They flew away together like the wind and clouds, and seemed but one. The rider knew his animal, and the animal his rider, who, as they swept along by me, seemed little else than a stream of silver light, for his clothes were covered with silver lace, and his arms were of silver and steel. I told Prince Kotsohobey that the wild spirit of our Indians found vent in flying the plains for the buffalo—their cunning, in trapping the beaver. How well these sports are suited to their natures!"

In other passages, the same writer speaks of the Circassians as "these robber hordes of the hills," and describes them as ready, whenever anything is to be gained, for night assaults or private murders! So strangely different are the aspects of the same thing seen from different points, and through a colouring medium. The same author, however, states, what is all the more satisfactory and trustworthy for coming from such an authority: "The extent of their country is small, yet I believe much more vast than the casual reader is apt to imagine; and is of a wildness and ruggedness that cannot be conceived of

till seen, and, when visited, cannot fail to arouse a wonder that, even after a forty years' war, the Russians have been able to obtain a foot of the soil. The heights are inaccessible to their cavalry, the deep gorges are impassable to their artillery. Thus, with the exception of two narrow ways, this range of dark and tangled ravines, and black and frightful cliffs, inhospitable in every aspect but to those whose homes they are—having a mean breadth of two hundred miles, a length of eight hundred miles, a surface of five thousand leagues—remains, from its very nature, almost literally free to its rude, uncultivated tribes." Such an opinion, expressed by a writer whose work betrays an undisguised sympathy with the Russian invaders, is well calculated to cheer the minds of those whose more generous sympathies are with the oppressed and unjustly invaded mountaineers.

Some of the accounts furnished by Mr. Bell, of the more distinguished Circassians with whom he had intercourse, serve to throw much additional light on the national character, the bravery, and also the superstitious faith of this people. One of his Circassian hosts, of whom he speaks at some length, was Ratûk Hattav, a hero of singular daring: "My present estimable host, Ratûk Hattav," says he, "narrates, with regard to Shautkhur, a fabulous story of its first occupant having been a youth of great bodily delicacy, but singular intrepidity, who was advised to spend the night upon a bridge over some neighbouring stream, where he witnessed the

appalling spectacle of a combat between two hosts of *Jins*, or returned spirits ; of his having refused obedience to the mandate of the chief of the *Jins* ; of a beautiful girl having met him on the bridge, and received of him encouragement in her dread to cross it on that night of horrors ; of these two having subsequently been married, and their progeny having been the occupants of the celebrated city from which they emigrated to Temegui, where their descendants resided, who now form the princely sept of Bûlatûk. As for the city, or rather village, all that now remains to be seen of it is a fosse, enclosing some eight to ten acres, between the streams Nefl and Psebebs. I can readily forego the labour of making a couple of days' journey, in the present inclement weather, to see such a sight ; but as to the hunting on the Kûban, my curiosity has been greatly stimulated by Hattav (who, in this respect, promises to rival ' General Boon, the backwoodsman of Kentucky') having shown me the stump of a horn (a portion of which I shall carry home), and given me the description of an animal which I cannot conceive to be any other than that giant of the *cervi*, the elk, which, he says, abounds on the low, reedy, rich lands on each side of the Kûban.

" In one of his many hunting excursions occurred an incident for which, as well as many other valorous deeds, I have often heard his fame through Shamuz and others ; and having now got more particulars, I shall relate it,  the incredulity with

which such marvellous tales may be met by some; because, for those who desire to have a solution of the mystery of such protracted resistance of the Circassians to Russia, I cannot find any others—in the absence of all organization and means for calling forth, on invasion, the physical strength of the population—than the strong sense of social obligation which appears to be impressed upon every one, and the rivalry of heroism among the numerous brave individuals; which heroism not only thins the ranks of the enemy, and imposes upon him a cautious respect, but gives ever a phoenix-birth to successive galaxies of heroes. But to my tale.

“Hattav and nine companions having determined ‘their pleasure in these reedy lands’ (equally dangerous with those of Otterbourne of old) ‘some summer days to take,’ had approached the Kûban for that purpose; and after two days’ hunting, in which they had killed and prepared for carriage thirty to forty elks, they had set forth for their sport on the third morning, when Hattav and a friend got separated from the rest, and soon after encountered a body of Russian military, consisting of about fifty infantry and three hundred Cossacks, sent across the river by portable boats to capture the party. The two hunters were on foot, which put escape out of the question, and surrendering was for them as much so. While the enemy was at a distance, they retreated, firing from favouring localities upon the most venturous. The two officers of the troops then getting


impatient at seeing their men fall, put themselves at the head of the Cossacks, and advanced with them more rapidly ; but both having been shot dead, the ardour of their followers cooled, and the infantry made a movement for surrounding the two hunters, who then placed themselves back to back, and loaded and fired by agreement alternately, bringing down a man at every shot. At length, however, their condition got so desperate from the expenditure of their ammunition, and one of them being severely wounded, that he advised Hattav to attempt to escape ; but this he refused to do, and after having fired their last shot, and kept the Russians for some time at bay by feints, they were both captured, when Hattav, as being unwounded and still thought dangerous, was secured by cords, and both were carried into Russia, where they remained some months, until exchanged for three Russian prisoners. The clothes of both (Hattav kept his as a token of remembrance) were riddled by balls, only two of which took effect, grazing the side and piercing the thigh of Hattav's friend ; while of the Russians there were the two officers killed, and about fifteen soldiers killed and wounded. This wonderful display of the superiority of the rifle over the musket in such desultory fighting, and of the fear of such a body of Russians to come to close quarters with the sabres and daggers of two desperate Circassians, occupied several hours, having lasted from soon after the time the two friends left their couch among the reeds in a spring morning

till nearly mid-day. I need scarcely say that Hattav is a famed shot; he possesses, moreover, great strength and agility of body, and a very lively and energetic character.

"I should tire you, and perhaps myself too, in attempting to record all the heroes of whose prowess I have heard; yet I feel tempted to add, in reference to Osman of Tejaghuz in November last, that in the distressingly paralytic state, in consequence of a fall, in which he left me, he went directly to the field of battle and remained there, sharing in the warfare till the Russians evacuated the country; and that he has since—though little or no better—been on an expedition against the cattle of the garrison of Doba, where, in an encounter with the Russians, he received a musket-ball in the shoulder, of which his comrades knew nothing till they had reached his home, where he mentioned his wound for the first time. I forbear to tell you particularly, though attested by numbers, how a slight and weak-looking man, Melish of Sûkwa, who is so lame and indisposed from an old wound, which gives him great and incessant pain, that he cannot move about but on horseback, rescued *alone*, during the last sortie of the Russians from Anapa, a woman and four girls from a party of from forty to fifty cavalry who had surprised their hamlets!"

Of Hattav, who escaped in exchange for Russian prisoners, notwithstanding his having given the Russians such abundant cause for seeking to retaliate on him their fiercest revenge, Mr. Bell gives a

pleasing account. His wife and he were warmly attached to one another, notwithstanding the ungallant ideas entertained by him, in common with all Circassians, as to the social rights and position of woman. The terms in which Mr. Bell speaks of both, contrast, indeed, strikingly with the comparison of the whole people, by the American, to the rude savages of his own country's unexplored forests: "He being a good Mussulman, a remarkably brave warrior, a kind husband, a most generous friend, a lively companion, and an active, industrious person in both public and private affairs; and she a fond, dutiful, cheerful wife and very clever housekeeper." After describing their kindness, not only to a houseful of nephews and nieces, but even to a young Polish serf, it is no wonder that the English traveller should conclude with the wish, "Heaven grant them still a long lease of their plenty and content, unembittered by the domination of the Muscovite!"




CHAPTER V.

RELIGION OF THE CAUCASUS.

THE poetical mythology of the ancient Greeks pictured amid the giant mountains of the Caucasus, the towering steep which reached to Olympus, and, amid its rocky heights, the fabled Prometheus lay bound and tortured by the avenging gods, for stealing fire from heaven. No trace of classic fable, however, preserves any local memory of such fancies among the dwellers on these far-famed heights ; but all have been replaced by Oriental legend and Mohammedan superstition.

The Circassians have been spoken of as Mussulmen, and from their reverence for the Koran, and their strong attachment to Turkish, in opposition to Russian manners, intercourse, or alliance, this is correct. Their religion, however, would probably appear to a true Mussulman of Constantinople as of a very piebald character. The Lesghians, a race having a mixture of Tartar blood, and occupying the south-eastern range of the Caucasian chain, are, indeed, for the most part, fanatic Mussulmen, and the same is said to be the case with the Tchetchentzes, who occupy the country enclosed by the Terek and Caspian. Among the true Circassians, however, the popular creed seems to be of a very loose and undefined character, embracing many rude superstitious



beliefs, and consisting, in its religious observances, for the most part, of a few forms and ceremonies relative to fasts and funeral rites, compounded alike from those of Mohammedanism and of the Greek Church.

A few selections from the narratives of travellers will serve to illustrate this rude form of religious belief, in addition to some of the allusions to *Jins* and other goblin spirits already referred to. "In ascending the small valley of Kwaff," says Mr. Bell, "to seek quarters for the night, I saw parties of people diverging from it for their homes. We then came to a lofty pole, which was firmly planted in the ground. On the upper end was transfixed the head of a goat, whose skin stretched by sticks waved from the pole like a banner in the breeze; close at hand was a sort of canopy formed by four poles, with a flat roof of branches and leaves thickly intertwined, and a small circular inclosure of stout wicker-work. The latter I found to be the sacred spot on which the goat had received his blessed death by a thunderbolt, while his mortal remains—saving the head and skin aforementioned—were inclosed in the roof of the canopy. Immediately adjoining these trophies, a large circular space of the grass, trodden and withered, showed where the males and females of the neighbourhood had danced and feasted during the three preceding days, in commemoration of the honour conferred on this valley by Tshibl  , the spirit of thunder.


"Although this relic of ancient superstition has

gone out of respect in the more strictly Mussulman portions of the coast, yet the employment of the name of thunder, Tshibl  , as an asseveration in conversation, is common throughout the coast. From Pshat to Wa  a, is the portion in which the greatest remains of Christianity mingled with such other rites are still to be found."

Again, the same traveller describes an equally characteristic specimen of the native admixture of Christian or Mussulman rites with superstitious observances alien alike to both: "Luca," says he, "has just been attending a celebration at one of the numerous crosses in this part of the country, each of which it appears has its special day. The rites appear to be a mixture of those of Christianity and of some other faith. On this occasion only about fifty persons were present, each of whom, who is head of a family, brought with him a table or tables for refreshments. Besides these, two or three goats were sacrificed, lighted tapers being placed at their heads at the time, while others were placed on the cross. At a short distance from the latter the tables were arranged, and each person on passing them took off his bonnet; but no one approached the cross excepting some three or four individuals, who said aloud a short prayer—an invocation to the Deity for the averting from them of war, pestilence, and every other evil, and sending them plenteous harvest and happiness. On approaching the cross and saying the prayer, one of these individuals held in one hand some of the

eatables taken from the tables, and in the other a bowl of the national drink, shuat, which were then distributed among the congregation. A reaction in favour of this their ancient religion, is, it appears, now prevalent, not only here, but in other localities towards the north; many of the people exclaiming, that it is since the neglect of its rites that all their present distress has come upon them. At Semez, a similar but greater celebration of the rites consecrated to Tshibl , the spirit of thunder, than what I before mentioned, has just been held, in consequence of three horses having been killed and a tree struck."

Mr. Bell gives a report of an interesting conversation which he had with one of his Circassian hosts on the subject of religion, showing not only an inquiring and liberal mind, but also an ardent desire for some knowledge of divine truth, such as is calculated to fill the Christian's mind with sadness, at the thought of a noble people such as this being left with no better hope to cheer them in a dying hour, or guide them amid the temptations and vicissitudes of life, than such as their vague superstitions present. The Circassian appealed to his English guest to tell him if God had given no more than one book to men? The conversation which ensued showed an honest and discriminating recognition of moral principles and motives of action, and a very clear application to the subject of his inquiry of the Scripture maxim, "The tree is known by its fruits; for men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles."




"His drift," says Mr. Bell, "which I did not see at first, soon became apparent—namely, something to steer by in the wavering of his faith; for, said he, 'the Turks say that you, as a Ghiaour, must be doomed to hell; but you refused, the other day, to give medicine for a particular purpose, because it is a great crime; and you show anxiety to buy slaves that you may set them at liberty; whereas a trifling gain would have induced a Turk to give the medicine, and he would make slaves of all of a different creed, believing that Paradise is for those of his faith only. *I fear he does not tell us the truth.*'"

It is sad to think of such an earnest inquirer bowing down to an imaginary Tshibl , the spirit of thunder. Yet such is apparently what must be regarded as the Circassian deity. Mr. Bell thus describes his first attendance on Divine service in the Caucasus; a thing apparently of rare occurrence, as this opportunity did not occur till he had been a considerable time in the country. "About mid-day," says the traveller, "I set out on foot attended by my host, by Indar-ok  Kaspolet, all the males of our hamlet, and sundry others; and on the way down our glen we were joined by many more, some of whom bore on their heads tables covered with loaves of bread or masses of pasta. A young man preceded us to place stepping-stones for me—the only one shod—across the many windings of the stream, then swollen by the heavy equinoctial rains we have had. A short walk along the side of the valley of

the Pshat brought us into an ancient portion of the neighbouring oak forest, among whose venerable trees were assembled several men proportionably as aged, besides a host of younger ones and of boys—forming together a congregation of a hundred and twenty or thirty, some of whom were seated on fallen trees, and others on branches strewn on the ground, and forming two sides of a square, at some little distance from the largest tree; beside which stood erect one cross, while against it were laid numerous disused ones, which had served the sacred purpose in their day, and are now consecrated to ‘decay’s slow ravage.’

“ On our entering these sacred precincts, all who were seated arose and stood till I had taken my seat on a cloak spread for me on some foliage. Several of those who arrived afterwards lifted their caps in salutation, instead of raising the right hand to the head, as is commonly done. In front of the cross were ranged, in rows, from forty to fifty small tables covered, like those I have mentioned, with loaves of bread and masses of pasta; and behind it hung from a transverse beam sundry large kettles over a blazing fire: close at hand were two goats tied—the sacrifice of the day—impatiently awaiting their fate; and numerous dogs (sure of something falling to their share) prowled around, and gave occupation to the boys in scaring them from the tables. As for the men, after conversing for some time within the place of assembly, parties of them at length retired beyond it to discuss their private affairs; while—so little of



the 'bump of veneration' do these children of nature possess—several occupied the tedious interval of time in preparing saddle-straps, and my neighbour Kaspolet in arranging anew my sabre-girth. The time that elapsed may be imagined from the fact of the cauldrons having been set to boil about the time of our assembling, and the goats that were to be consigned to them not having been sacrificed till a considerable time after. This was done in the same way as on the fête of the Cross. An invocation was then made to the Spirit of Thunder by those few who had charge of the tables, and who remained uncovered throughout, interceding for general protection, and that the bolt, as well as every other evil, might be averted from them and their families. Immediately afterwards two large cakes were served to me, along with a bowl of shuat (millet-flour, honey and water fermented), and then a general distribution of these refreshments was made to all assembled, down to the very youngest boys, and the beverage continued to be circulated around from time to time until the meat was cooked. During this interval also, the old men, after having been some time congregated together, appeared to have instructed a younger one, who, in a rapid address to us, announced three approaching fête-days, and the number and kind of victims (goats or bullocks) requisite for each: as so many for the cross, so many for abundance, and so many for averting the plague.

“Another long interval ensued before the contents


of the kettles were ready, and at length the consummation so desired, by me at least, was attained, when the chief priest (if one may so call the busy individual in shirt and drawers among the tables) cut the meat in such portions as afforded to every table an equal one. On that destined for Kaspolet and me there were placed half-a-dozen large loaves of excellent bread, which, except the one cut for us, our host was allowed to bring home for my use. As for the bread and pasta of the other tables (which were all as plenteously provided), the repast was scarce well begun, when there were applications made for them by those who had contributed the goats, and who filled several cloaks with the contributions made. Shuat was liberally served while we ate, and immediately upon our being done the whole assembly dispersed."

The custom of religious sacrifices seems to form a part of all the sacred proceedings of the Circassians, while along with these some of their fêtes and observances partake of a Hebrew character, and might, in the eye of some fanciful travellers, seem to afford traces of a portion of the long lost ten tribes, who are so frequently looked for even now in the remoter regions of Asia. The same traveller, whose interesting journal has already supplied some striking illustrations of the ill-defined creed and religious observances of these mountaineers, thus describes a religious fête of a peculiar character, at which he was present. "It may be called," he says, "the Feast of Presentation; and one fond of tracing descents might

assign to it a Jewish one, and hold it but a commemoration of the sacrifice of Abraham; for the usage here is that every boy, after a certain age, 'be presented to God' at this fête, and that an animal be sacrificed for him; and such consideration has this usage attained, that even those who profess themselves Mussulmans, and hold all these observances somewhat in aversion, as 'not ordained by their book,' are constrained, either by the force of habit or the influence of the opinion of the majority, to comply with it. Thus my present kind host, Zekwahaz-oku, one of this class, to-day presented his son. The place of meeting was again in the valley of the Pshat, on a green, where a grove of venerable oaks forms one of nature's own solemn sanctuaries for worship. In the midst of it stands a cross (decayed ones reclining behind), and before it were again ranged the tables, covered with loaves of bread or masses of pasta, as they were brought by different parties from the hamlets around; and I observed that many (not all) of those who carried them, after handing them to the priest, took off their caps, kneeled before the cross, and bowed their foreheads to the ground.

"At a short distance on one side of these sacred precincts, a rural couch was spread for me, and on the other the females, who began to arrive soon after me, and might amount, in all, to about sixty, old and young, ranged themselves—the matrons on the green round a fire, and the girls on the verge of a thicket adjoining. The ceremonial, which was more solemn

than on the other occasion, commenced as formerly, with a short petition to the 'Great God' (Ta skho) for the conferring of every blessing and the averting of every evil. The chief priest, in pronouncing it, held forward towards the cross in his right hand a wooden goblet (of the same form as those used in our church service) filled with shuat, and in his left a large cake of *unleavened* bread, which he then handed to his attendants, and received from them five or six times successively other goblets and cakes, over which the same benediction was said, and repeated aloud by all the congregation, who had placed themselves in ranks behind the priest on their knees, and with their caps off, bowing their foreheads to the ground at the termination of each benediction, as did the matrons also. The shuat and cakes were then distributed to all of us. The victims—namely, a calf, a sheep, and two goats—were next brought in front of the cross, each held by a couple of men, while the priest pronounced a benediction over each, poured upon its forehead some shuat from one of the goblets, and singed some of its hair there with one of the waxen tapers which burned at the foot of the tree behind the cross. They were then led away to be slaughtered, which was the signal for the congregation dispersing rather tumultuously—at least the younger portion of it—some of whom went to aid in the cutting up and preparing of the meat in a row of large kettles, and others to amuse themselves till it was ready, by racing, leaping, &c. ; while the seniors



spent the interval in conversational parties. As for the chief priest, who performed his duties with considerable dignity, he remained during all the time erect in front of the cross and tables, his head uncovered, a mantle over his shoulders, and a staff in his hand, directing his assistants in their duties, not the least important part of which appeared to be an equal distribution of the meat among the numerous tables, of which there were about sixty. Over each of them a benediction was pronounced by the priest before they were served to us on the green around—to the females as well as males—along with abundance of shuat. Our repast as formerly was scarcely well begun, when those who had contributed the animal portion of it made a circuit to petition for the abundant surplus of our bread and pasta; and it was no sooner ended than the assembly dispersed. The number present on this occasion might be from four to five hundred. Last year I am told there were five times as many, and that dancing, horse-racing, mark-firing, &c., formed the amusements. The deficiency in attendance this year is attributed to the increasing distress and anxiety caused by the progress of the Russians, who, by-the-by, were not forgotten in the prayers, it having been petitioned that they might ‘be struck with blindness.’ ”

Since Mr. Bell’s visit to the Caucasus the Russians have continued their inroads without interruption, though not without effectual resistance and frequent defeat. But a new character has been given to the

resistance of the Circassians, as well as of the neighbouring tribes of the Eastern Caucasus, by the elements of religious enthusiasm and fanatic zeal being brought to the aid of their brave patriotism, under the influence of more than one prophet-leader, armed, like the founder of the Moslem's faith, with the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other. This religious spirit, bursting out with all the fervour of religious and national fanaticism, has marked the struggle of the Caucasians for their independence long prior to the deceitful treaty of Adrianople, by means of which the Russians sought to give a legal colouring to their aggressions. It is now nearly eighty years since Sheik Mansoor made his way from Bagdad to the Caucasus, preaching a crusade against the Muscovites. In 1791 he was taken prisoner, and sent to a monastery on the White Sea, where he died. In 1823, a Bucharian scholar, called Hasma-homet, came and obtained many followers, among whom was Kaseemoolah, who agitated a war with Russia, and gained to his standard seven thousand men. He then attacked the fortress of Wnezapnaia, and slaughtered many of the inhabitants; afterwards went to the town of Káslar and plundered it; but he was finally defeated by General Kahanoff, in the vicinity of the fort Boornaya. In 1832, Baron Rosen led an expedition against him, and stormed the village Gymroc, where he abode. It was a most brilliant but sanguinary affair. General Albrant lost here his arm, and Kaseemoolah was killed; he


was found dead in a house, his left hand grasping his beard, and his right a two-edged *cama*. Gumzalbek took his place; but having fled, after being defeated by the Russians at Gulsatel, was killed by some of his own sect at Hoonzah.

Gumzalbek is said to have been a very able leader, but with more ambition than religion. The immediate cause of his death was this: At Hoonzah he met with a very lovely woman, the widow of the chief just deceased, and he sought to marry her. She, however, assured him that her grief, as well as other reasons, must prevent it. He did not desist in his suit, and was about to take her by force; which, reaching the ears of the beautiful sufferer, caused her to collect the servants about her, and demand of them the death of her persecutor; saying to them, "Ye are worse than women if ye have not the strength and courage to defend the wife of your lamented master." One of them, named Hadgemuzad, inspired by her charms, took at once the oath (so sacred with all this people), to kill Gumzalbek at the very next mosque service. Gumzalbek having suspicions, gave orders, but unavailingly, that all who came to the mosque should come unarmed. Hadgemuzad concealed a pistol in his bosom, and when all were kneeling, he shot the chief dead. The widow lives with one she loves better.

Schamil, the Abd-el-Kader of the eastern tribes, now rises up, and more than fills the place of Gumzalbek or Hasmahomet. He is a native of the same

village in which Kaseemoolah was killed—in the commune of Koesooboo. He was a peasant, his parents were very poor, and he gained a livelihood by dancing in the streets and selling fruits. He also studied Arabic, and was such a proficient that he became the most eminent disciple of Gumzalbek; and when the latter was killed, was looked to as his best successor. He has now for years been a successful leader of the Circassians, and among them he bears a charmed name. Some of the Russians, however, say that he never appears personally in combat, but only gives general directions; and yet they tell the following story about his method of gaining power over the minds of his followers:—

A great attack was to be made on a Russian encampment. When the morning came, Schamil caused it to be reported that he was dead, but that in dying he had left word that they should not fail to carry out his plans, and his spirit would be with them accordingly. They went, disheartened, to the scene of battle. Schamil watched them at a distance, and on the instant when he saw that they wavered, he descended from the mountains, and as his white charger came sweeping over the plains, all thought it bore his spirit, and the cry of Schamil! Schamil! rang along the battling lines, hung above the sounds of strife, and electrified every heart; but when his bright sabre like lightning was seen cleaving the enemy, his hosts became invincible; they fought like madmen, and were everywhere victorious.



CHAPTER VI.


DEFENCE OF THE CAUCASUS.

"THE expedition of Salta," says Mr. Ditson in his tour to the Caucasus, "in which Schamil and Prince Woronsoff were so conspicuous, is considered the most memorable that has distinguished the army of the Caucasus. I will give an outline of it, as well as I can make it up, from various accounts I had from Russians who were connected with it:—

"Salta was one of those strongholds of the Circassians, the taking of which was deemed one of the most important events in the history of the Caucasian war. Its subjugation was of such moment, that Prince Woronsoff himself passed that mighty chain of mountains which has so long been the seat of those fierce struggles that have moved the world with wonder, pity, and astonishment, and led or directed in person the expedition set against it. The Prince was then suffering from ill health, and much was done and said to deter him from the long and dangerous journey and hazardous enterprise; but he knew too well the character of the person who commanded the enemy, to trust it to others less experienced in the art of war than himself. Besides, he was aware that many of his officers and good soldiers were to perish in the attack. He knew, too, that his presence would overawe the soldier who

would hear nothing, obey nothing, fear nothing but the command of his superior, while it would inspire confidence and courage in the officers, assured that each noble deed of daring would neither escape his notice nor go unrewarded.

With such feelings as these, he bade an affectionate adieu to his accomplished princess (who, from the high balcony of the palace, watched him till, descending to the banks of the Kur, he was lost to sight), and for the hundredth time passing that rapid stream which hurries on through the valley of Tiflis, and rolls its roaring waters between the rugged hills and rocky ravines of the capital of New Russia, he commenced his journey. Wearisome though it might be, it lay along one of the most picturesque routes which could possibly be formed by the combining of all that is sublime and majestic in natural scenery with the ingenuity of man. He reached the northern side of the Caucasus, and descended into the plains of Kabardà, where he joined the forces prepared for the expedition. When the news arrived of his near approach, the utmost joy and enthusiasm pervaded every bosom. Each battalion, drawn up in order under its respective commanders, showed to double advantage, as the light of a clear and serene sky fell on the burnished arms of the waiting mass, already animated by the tidings that he who had foiled Napoleon was to be their leader; and when he came to enter between these long, firm lines of devoted soldiers, ~~and~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~ ~~accord~~, the whole presented



arms, it was a sad but thrilling sight, though it was observed that he sat more erect in his saddle, and that a gleam of satisfaction and content passed over his noble face. On the following day, at early light, the drums beat to arms. The rapid movement of the officials, the gathering of luggage-carts, the numerous couples that were seen at the cottage doors leave-taking, showed that a march of the army was about to commence; and when the sun went down, bright weapons and white tents were seen glistening far away, on the brow of an elevated range of land that looked towards the hills of the Lesghini.

For some days their course was along the fertile savannas of Chechentsy, with the Terek on the left, hurrying its well-stocked waters to the Caspian; while those bold peaks and jagged passes which had been so long contested and yielded up, one by one, as the heart's life-blood, to the superior force and genius of the Russians, lay on their right.

At length they turned from the plains, and entered those long mountain defiles, whose sterile and sombre sides, and sunless twin ravines, where the bat flies by day, and where night adds little to their gloom, show them so unworthy of the wealth that has been expended on them; and, continuing their route, now more difficult, though free from those fierce enemies which had long since, by similar expeditions, been driven out from it, finally entered the territory of Lesghini, and in two days more were near the scene of a new memorable event.

The Lesghini—the most savage and fearless tribes of all that dwell on this great wall, which seems intended by the Creator to mark the boundary of a nation, and to be inhabited by a people (till, at least, a new civilization should dawn upon the earth) wild as the fastnesses they were to defend—knowing of the invader's step, whose noise to their ears was like that of the rushing wind through a well-clothed forest, came gathering from hill and vale, and mountain crag, and ærial table-land, as the alarm fires from the watch-towers which crowned each giddy height, blazed up with fitful and portentous aspect, sent their light along from peak to peak, and spread over the heavens a tint blood-red and significant; which, reflected back from the shifting clouds, spread a lurid and fearful glow over the gloom of the deepest glens, and into the very mists of those hidden caverns, fit only for the wild beasts, but inhabited by a hunted people, and now echoing to the sound of human feet hurrying to battle. They came as the locusts borne on the *sirocco*; they sprang up from places where none but a mountaineer would have dreamed that mortal dwelt; and as stars come out as the shades of evening advance, so appeared these sons of the hills, covered with glistening arms, when a foe, who sought to bring the night of oppression upon them, drew his dark folds about their homes.

Salta was the place of rendezvous, and here the brave Schamil, the Napoleon of the Circassians, gathered his faithful followers, and awaited the enemy.

Salta is situated in the heart of that vast congregation of mountains which fill up the greater portion of the region between longitude 63° and 65° E., and latitude 41° and 43° N. In the gradual retreat of the inhabitants as the Russians from year to year advanced their posts, Schamil had pitched upon this position, not only for its great beauty, but because it could easily be made defensible, there being but one approach to it where a force of any magnitude could manœuvre—that on the east; for to the north and south nature had reared her adamantine walls to such a height that the eagle only knew their summits; while to the westward the little sparkling rivulet of the Koucy, which came down from the valley above, cheering with its ceaseless music the children of the plain as well as the villagers of Salta, as it passed through the centre of the town and around the temple of the prophet, descended over precipitous rocks, which shut up that pass, and was lost to sight long before the sound of its successive falls ceased to come back upon the ear, or the mist which ascended from it ceased to be seen rising up the sides of the gorge that seemed cleft solely for its passage. Thus hemmed in, it was to them for a time as the vale of Rasselas.

The Koucy, which fertilized the soil, and gave to the faithful the daily means of purifying themselves according to the injunctions of the prophet, hurried away from this green spot, and soon joined a river of the same name; then, continuing north-

ward till free from its mountain boundaries, it wound away eastward through some broad plains, and entered the Caspian Sea.

A short distance from Salta, up the valley of this stream, a little path, known only to the natives, turned suddenly to the left, skirted along in its abrupt ascent the edge of a projecting ledge of rocks, called the *coup de main*, that overhung the open space, the scene of the Russian encampment, and then retreating, led the way to more distant heights and far-off valleys. Through this the women and children had disappeared on the approach of the enemy, and by this the great captain and his few surviving warriors eventually saved their lives, and breathed again that pure air which seems to brace them for fresh combat.

When, after the years of long and fruitless contests on the frontier already spoken of, Schamil raised here his standard, hundreds of the Lesghini—who love war neither for glory, pay, nor honours, but for its mere excitement—flocked around it as the palladium of liberty, or, more truthfully, of rapine and plunder, built here their little castellated houses, and surrounded the whole by a strong wall.

The town and fortifications arose as by magic; they were not of slight structure, but firm like the rocks around them, from which the labourers had derived instruction; and the prolonged batterings they afterwards endured showed how well the work had been done, and with how much skill planned.

This, however, was not all that was relied on. At different distances outside the walls, large pitfalls were dug and slightly covered with brushwood, over which neither cavalry nor artillery could pass. From within the walls, underneath them, and under the ground, were also dug long galleries and chambers, which extended far out into the plain, having overhead numerous apertures, just large enough for the passage of the barrel of a musket.

In such a position, girded by such strength and covert ways; with numerous cannon that had been from time to time clandestinely supplied to them by the Turks; with gunners, and engineers, and officers the high-spirited Poles had sent among them; with the temple and standard of the prophet in their midst; their hatred of the northmen and natural aversion to the strides of civilization; and, above all, with Schamil for their leader, and his charmed name and presence to inspire them, we can well imagine that, in the fullest confidence of success, they awaited patiently the approach of the enemy.

On the evening preceding the battle, Schamil called together his officers and addressed them as follows:—

‘ Our brethren westward have ceased hostilities. They have submitted, at least seemingly, to wear patiently the chain which never ceases to gall them. Their full-blood steeds which were wont to bear them nobly over these wild passes, and fiercely in battle, you will now see on the plain roads drudging for their enemies. Our nation, thus far, has made due

oblations to the standard of our prophet, and has never bestowed upon it churlish honour; for which reason his strong arm has drawn for us the string of our bows, made tough the steel of our knives, and turned from our bodies the pointed weapons and iron messengers of our foe. Our beacon-fires burned brightly last night, and the faithful have gathered as to a feast, and we are numberless; for the prophet is with us, and he his host.

‘That we shall all survive this new defence of our sacred temples is not asked for; and he who departs first shall be happiest in paradise. If we are not victorious, let the slaughter we make of those Christian dogs atone fully for our defeat.’ ‘Inshallah!’ (please God), responded the listeners, ‘We sleep to-night as beneath the veil, which, lifting, reveals to us the glories of our holy prophet’s abode,’ continued the speaker, ‘and to-morrow we fight in his name; and where you see floating the banner of your chief, be sure that your defence is there swift and strong.’ ‘Mashallah!’ (in the name of God), again answered the officials; and the soldiery, who had also gathered in the great square in front of the mosque, from the steps of which Schamil was haranguing his staff, caught up the acclaim, and with one universal shout, *Mashallah* was sent ringing through a thousand valleys, while the hill-sides sent back the echo like mingled music.

When the speaker had finished, he turned and entered the sacred edifice for prayer.

Under cover of the night, the Russians had drawn up their forces, as many as could conveniently manœuvre, on the small plain to the east of the city, placing their cannon in the most commanding position possible, but which at best was far from what was desirable. It was at first intended to carry the place at once by storm, and commence the assault under cover of the artillery; but this was soon seen to be impracticable, and a new order of battle had to be arranged; but at early dawn the firing commenced, distinguished by all that accurateness and energy which has ever accompanied the Russian arms.

But the astonishment of the assailants can better be imagined than described, when there opened upon them from every embrazure of the till now blank walls, the most terrific and well-directed heavy ordnance they had ever encountered.

The prince at once remarked that another than Schamil commanded there, that some European had the direction of affairs. This was too true; for an exiled Polish officer had sought out the home of the chief, and volunteered his services in the war against the common enemy.

Eager for renown, and well skilled in military tactics, he had enlisted, he thought, in the great cause of liberty, willing to stake limb and life in her defence. But he had, like many others, mistaken his people. Believing them to be a band of patriots, he joined with them, heart and hand, but found them (say the Russians), to be an unprincipled horde of

robbers, without the honour or honesty of thieves; and trusting to their perfidious characters, which he thought elevated and noble, like the Highlanders of Scotland, and generous as his own compatriots, met with a fate too great a number of his countrymen had courted in the same field of doubtful glory.

He had, it seemed, promised to save this place from the enemy if he was allowed the management of the defence; but having failed in it, though from no fault or want of ability of his own, and having escaped with the rest when his skill was found unavailing and defeat sure, he was stabbed by a hundred different hands, as one by one of those whom he had tried to serve passed him in their retreat. He was found soon after and honourably interred, and mourned over by many a brave soldier, as a brave officer, deserving a better destiny.* But to return to our fight.

The position held by the Russians, though the only one that could have been occupied with any advantage, was found to be untenable, unless the enemy's batteries could be immediately silenced; for they were sweeping down the ranks that stretched along the plain, and were shattering their solid flanks as lightning the resisting oak. The prince accordingly ordered the town to be carried by storm, and

* This part of the account is manifestly grossly prejudiced, and rests on no authority except the vague slanders of the defeated Russians. The honours said to have been paid to the remains of the Polish officer are equally apocryphal.

officer and soldier, alike forward to do their great champion's behest, moved earnestly, firmly, and steadily to the assault. But as they advanced, the former, one by one, fell dead before their columns; for there issued from the ground invisible destruction; the Circassians being secreted in those caverns they had made, and watching through the small apertures the opportunity to pick off with their bows and muskets the most distinguished of the enemy. Consternation seized upon the troops, for they knew not on what they were treading. Balls issued from beneath their feet, which seemed to stand on solid ground; and from every quarter where least expected, there flew thickly, literally, the arrows of death; these mountaineers being as expert with the bow as with the rifle.

Without leaders the troops stood still, wavered, and were about to fly, when the prince himself, with all his military ardour, appeared before them, and led on to the very ramparts. Two of his distinguished generals fell dead at his side; but there was no more halting, no more delay. Breaches were made, the walls were scaled, and officer and man strove, with fatal energy, to gain there a footing. But the Damascus blade and the slender knife, resistless in their course, glistened in their thousand angles, as they cleaved alike the air and the enemy; and where the fight was thickest, there waved the sacred banner. Schamil himself bore it, seeking out those places most pressed by the enemy, and at those points, as

he had ordered on the previous night from the steps of the temple, aid and defence was swift and sure.

Night descended early and gloomily down the mountain sides, and settled darkly over the valley. The scene of strife had ceased, but not the work of sadness; for within the town all were busy gathering and burying the dead, repairing the walls, and preparing for new defence.

Day came again, bright and beautiful, but its light fell upon a wearied and exhausted people, who, to invigorate and purify themselves with water, pray, and be ready again for battle, turned first their steps to the abundant fountains, which here, as in every Moslem city, were numerous, and of rich and costly device. But what was their astonishment when they found them all dry; that not a drop of the cool and never-failing Koucy passed into the marble basins, nor even flowed longer round the holy mosque. A murmur of despair went up from every habitation; and curses, long and loud, swelled upon the breeze till they came to the wondering Schamil's ears. Listening to what had happened, he hastened to the watch-tower, which stood at the eastern end of the town, and overlooked the field of the encampment; and far along the valley of the vagrant stream, and discovering at once the origin of the evil, returned to the great square, and from the steps of the temple, where hardly a day before he had so stirred the fiery spirits of his belligerent horde with the certitude of victory, that they were as ready for the contest as

willing to embrace their own offspring, thus addressed the alarmed multitude that now followed him :

‘ Faithful and loved of the prophet ! our enemy who could not conquer us, has, with that cunning which surpasses his strength, turned the stream which flowed hard by these sacred walls into another channel dug in the darkness of the night, while we were performing the accustomed rites and solemn ceremonies for our dead. This has been well ordained, for those waters, polluted by the impure blood of our hated foes, could no longer cleanse us, and it would have only added to our necessity of ablution if we had continued to wash therein. It is well, I said ; and to-night we will bathe our swords in those currents which flow through their unhallowed souls, and will wash them hereafter in purer streams afar off. When the deepest sleep has fallen on them, you will cut your way to the pass that leads to your children and your wives—Schamil will be with you.’ Inshallah ! responded the people ; for their fears ceased, and their hearts were quieted, while, with their thirsting lips, they prayed for the close of day.

The comprehensive and ever active mind of Woronsoff could not fail to discover the most speedy and effective means for the subjugation of an enemy, and he instantly hit on the expedient of changing the course of the stream on which he was encamped, and which he judged was the only source of supply of wholesome water the inhabitants of Salta enjoyed. His men accordingly, when day and battle had

ceased, were set to the work, and by the time of another dawn the river ran in a new channel southward of the city.

The calm of that summer morning, which spread out its golden wings over the rude works of nature that hemmed in these armed bands, seemed to pervade every heart, and perfect tranquillity and peace rested on the town, which it was supposed would soon surrender. The prince also, wishing to preserve as many of his brave soldiers as possible from needless battle, remained quiet, without making any further demonstration of hostility.

The day finished as it had begun. But at midnight the tramp of hurrying horse, the sound of new havoc, and the clash of arms, swept through the Russian tents, and in an instant all their occupants were engaged in a fearful struggle with the escaping enemy.

Schamil and his immediate attendants had passed the pickets before any well-organized defence could be made; but those who strove to follow were opposed at the sword's point and the slaughter at once became dreadful.

The Circassians were fighting for their lives; for, by this route, along the valley of the stream, lay their only way of retreat, and they had the great advantage of their enemy by being fully prepared for the onset; while the latter had little more to gain than was already falling into their hands, and had been aroused from sound sleep, the drum that beat to arms calling also to battle.

But none could have acquitted themselves more honourably than did the Russian soldiery. With pistols at their breasts, with the withy blades of Damascus wreathing over their heads, or with the two-edged cama gleaming before their eyes, they, sword in hand, grappled with these wiry Mussulmen, and hundreds were the steeds that passed on without their riders.

Those who escaped from this bloody affray rushed up the narrow path to seek the bewildering and rugged heights above; and as they wound their way high up along the edge of the mountain crag of the *coup de main* before described, the moon burst out from a dark cloud, and Schamil on his black charger, bearing the banner of the prophet, was seen standing on its boldest cliff. His bright steel coat of mail glittered in the light, and he seemed a spirit resting half-way between heaven and earth; for his sacred standard waved amid the clouds, and his noble animal, fearless as its rider, had advanced to the very brink of the rock, waiting, motionless, the faithful few that had so signally escaped death.

And now this band came filing along the summits of those great barriers which they thought no enemy could ever pass or dare to assail; and looking down on the distant and diminutive mosque and minaret, town and tower, and fatal rivulet still glistening in the moonlight like a silver thread, all were silent as the shadows about them; but when they came to the spot where Schamil was last seen by the enemy,

each one drew up his rein, and pausing for a moment, gave an audible farewell to the graves of too many of his late comrades that now rested from their labours in the glen below; then turning away his horse's head, departed for those caverns and distant haunts from which the beacon fires had so lately called him.

The Cossacks, when they discovered the way by which these Lesghian brigands were escaping, sprang to their saddles from which they had just dismounted, and essayed to follow. But the sturdy horse that could gallop unweariedly over the sterile steppes of the north, stumbled at the first precipitous and rugged pass, and came rolling down upon those behind him; and when danger was added to the difficulty of advance, and even that of returning in the path ascended, all were glad to find themselves safe again on the plain from which they had started. And now, aware that no further struggle would be required that night, they laid their saddles under their heads and slept soundly till morning.

The day found many of them posted within the walls of Salta with orders for the construction of new fortifications, while the remainder of the victorious force turned back towards the plains of Kabardà."

An account of this expedition was sent to the Emperor Nicholas, the substance of which appeared in several journals, and was as follows:—

"After a hot and obstinate encounter on the morning of the 26th of July (1847), Salta was taken. It was besieged by our troops from the 19th to the

21st. We had lost three superior officers and one hundred and seventeen soldiers; the wounded were, one staff officer, twenty-six superior officers, and three hundred and sixty-one common soldiers. Salta is itself an important village, but circumstances, and especially the strong fortifications, and the incredible exertions of Schamil to defend it, rendered the taking of it the most important, and, in fact, the indispensable condition of a happy termination of this difficult and tedious campaign, and for securing the tranquillity of South Daghestan. The hindrances and the difficulties were astounding, and exceeded all expectations. The most desperate and the most valiant Muride had been called from every part of the Daghestan for the defence of this point. There is scarcely a village, nay, scarcely a tribe throughout the whole of the insurrectionary mountain, which had not friends or relatives in the garrison of Salta; and they fought with a valour and endurance as if the failure of this encounter involved their very existence. Never before had they fought with such pertinacity, the battle of Achulko perhaps excepted. Every step was the price of blood, and therefore the commander-in-chief hesitated at first, in order to avoid, if it were possible, the storming of the whole of Salta, unless he was forced to extremes. At last, on the morning of the 26th ult., after our artillery had taken very great effect, and after tremendous bombardment from 80 lbs. mortars, which had been brought into these mountains, we stormed in two

attacks, with our weapons in our hands, only that which was indispensably necessary to effect the garrisoning and fortifying of the right or northern side of the Oral, from whence we could almost entirely cut off the garrison from obtaining a supply of provisions. The waters flowing towards the enemy were spoiled by us; and all that remained to him was a little spring at which the exhausted soldiers endeavoured to quench their thirst, under the fire of the troops stationed in the garden on the side of Koisen. The miserable creatures, spent with hunger and quite disheartened by the fatal encounter of the morning, separated and fled in all directions, and fell under the bayonets of our troops. Major Count Orhelm, with a company of the regiments of Prince Paske-wich, and a detachment of the Achinski foot militia, met the main body division of the fugitives, which carried with them a cannon and the banner of Omar Molth, who had latterly had the supreme command in Salta. The greater part of this multitude were put to death in an instant. The cannon and the banners remained in our hands, and not half of the enemy that fled from the Orel escaped our bayonets, and the loss which the followers of Schamil have sustained in the recent encounters cannot possibly be estimated at less than three thousand men."

In reading the varied and often conflicting narratives of the progress of the struggle in the Caucasus, and the results achieved there by the Russian arms, those who have had opportunities of making them-


selves intimately acquainted with the true nature of the contest must often be forcibly reminded of *Æsop's* fable of the Sculptor and the Lion. Circassia may, indeed, win victories, but Russia chronicles them, with much the same candour and veracity as the old monkish chroniclers of Rome have preserved the history of her struggles with the Waldenses, Albigenses, and other heretical foes whom she undertook to conquer.

George Leighton Ditson, the American traveller in the Crimea and the Caucasus, who thus chronicles with implicit faith the stories of Russian valour and victory which were told to him by his Russian hosts, very appropriately dedicates his book "to Prince Woronsoff, the bold and distinguished warrior, the accomplished diplomatist, the elegant courtier, and the intelligent and humane ruler!" Such a dedication furnishes a tolerably satisfactory key to the whole book, and warns the impartial reader of its probable tone and style of exaggeration throughout.

There is something truly gratifying to Russian pride and military love of glory in the fall of such a tremendous fortress as that of Salta; another Gibraltar, as it would seem, with its "town and fortifications," its "castellated houses," its "galleries, chambers, and covered ways," &c. Like a good many other Caucasian strongholds, however, which figure in St. Petersburg bulletins, it loses sadly in its features as a military strength on nearer approach, and when examined in the descriptions of

impartial observers, it turns out to have been little more than a village of mud huts, perched on a naturally strong position, and defended with such aids and appliances as the hardy mountaineers were able to bring to the help of their own indomitable courage and unyielding hatred of Russia. The victories of Prince Woronsoff are, in truth, of a piece with those of sundry other generals who have preceded him, and after winning many similar victories *on paper* and in official bulletins, have been recalled for, in reality, accomplishing nothing.

Some of these Russian military achievements of an earlier date are deserving of notice, from the light they throw on the general struggle and on the chance of ultimate success or failure. Schamil Bey, once the solitary horseman who effected his escape, the sole survivor of a band of thirty brave mountaineers who tried to hew their way through a strong Russian force by which they were surrounded, soon gave the Russians cause to rue the chance which freed him from their murderous bayonets. The fact of his having thus made his way unscathed, and sword in hand, through hundreds of Russian foes, whom he hewed down right and left, sweeping through their ranks like a deadly thunderbolt, seemed to his countrymen nothing short of miraculous. The story spread that the Archangel Gabriel had ridden by his side through the encircling host of foes, and swept around the destined leader of the Caucasian mountaineers his deadly flaming-sword. The story,



repeated from mouth to mouth, gathered ever new and more wonderful additions to the supposed supernatural agency by which the divine favour had been manifested in behalf of the chosen Schamil, until the slumbering fanaticism of the mountaineers was kindled to a pitch fully equal to that which animated the followers of Mahomet himself. Doubtless the enthusiasm re-acted on Schamil, until at length he came to believe himself the appointed leader of the true believers, raised up on purpose to drive back the infidel hosts of Russia and execute on them the just vengeance of God. What we have seen already accomplished in some districts by persuasion, or the growing sense of common interests and mutual wrongs, in securing the union of the whole Caucasian tribes against the invader, Schamil completed by a system of terror. It became a crime against which his utmost vengeance was denounced, for any tribe, village, or individual, to aid or enter into treaty with the Russians, or even to submit to them unless after the most determined resistance.

Schamil well illustrates the savage virtue which the poet has so vigorously described as—

“ The patient watch, and vigil long,
Of him who treasures up a wrong.”

He is said never to forget a face he has once seen, and to treasure up his wrath against an offender, whether Russian or Caucasian, for months, and even years, until an opportunity is found for executing his relentless vengeance. Under such a com-

bined system of patriotic fanaticism and the terror of his retributive vengeance, the Russians were forced to quail before these hardy mountaineers; and even Mr. Ditson's account shows the heroic Schamil Bey forcing his way through their mightiest hosts as if he bore a charmed life. In 1839 General Grabbe, who had been appointed to the command of the Russian army of the Caucasus proceeded to carry into execution well-concerted measures for the defeat and extirpation of Schamil's entire forces. Achulko was the reputed stronghold of the Caucasian chief, and figures, like others of the mountain strongholds, in the narratives and bulletins of the Russians as a fortress defended with all the modern appliances of military engineering, and garrisoned by a large force amply provided and prepared for a siege. In reality, however, Achulko, though naturally strong as a mountain post, was only a mud-hut encampment, constructed on the summit of a lofty rock-platform, on the banks of the Koucy. Schamil was altogether unprepared for the sudden attack of General Grabbe, who advanced on him at the head of 12,000 troops, and surprised him in an open part of the valley, where the dreaded Russian artillery was able to bear on the Caucasian force with deadly effect. By the suddenness of this well-concerted movement Schamil was compelled to retire upon Achulko, where, in reality, no preparation had been made for a siege. This step, however, was not taken till the Russians had been made to experience some-

what of the old indomitable valour of their mountain foes. As he retired towards Achulko, he repeatedly attacked the Russians, wherever the ground favoured him, frequently inflicting terrible losses among their close ranks. The followers of Schamil neither gave nor took quarter, and the Russians had to fight their way for six days up the valley, before they at length found themselves under the precipitous rocks of Achulko, and were able to commence preparations for the siege. Its fortifications were no more than a mud wall surrounding a collection of some hundred wattled huts; and General Grabbe accordingly ordered it to be immediately taken by assault, and its defenders made prisoners or put to the sword. Fifteen hundred picked men were selected for this *coup de main*, and placed under the command of Colonel Wrangel, with orders to advance immediately against Achulko, and take it by storm. M. le Comte Suzannet has preserved Colonel Wrangel's own account of the proceedings which followed on the attempt to put this command into execution:—

“Achulko, situated upon the point of a rock, was strong only by position. A deep ravine separated and isolated it from the surrounding mountains. In order to reach Achulko, it was necessary to descend a long ledge of rock hardly two feet wide. Whoever should chance to slip or be struck by a bullet, must fall over and perish miserably upon the rocks which, shutting in the bed of the torrent, form in this place precipices terrible as deep. General Grabbe

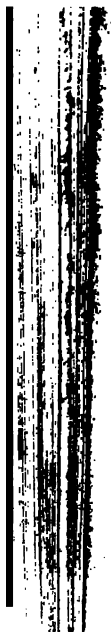
what of the old indomitable valor of their ancestors. As he retired towards Abovka, he repeatedly encountered the Russians, wherever the ground threw up lines frequently initiating terrible losses among the Caucasian ranks. The followers of Ismail met their rock quarries, and the Russians had a long way for six days up the valley, before they at length found themselves under the precipitous peaks of Abovka, and were able to commence preparations for the siege. Its fortifications were no more than a mud wall surrounding a collection of a hundred walled towers, and General Orlovsky was accordingly ordered to be immediately taken by assault, and the captured towers and prisoners or put to the sword. Twelve hundred picked men were selected for this purpose, and placed under the command of

Colonel Krasovskiy, who immediately commenced operations, and was joined by General M. G. Krasovskiy, who was ordered to bring up the siege. The siege of Abovka, which followed the capture of the fortress, was a long and arduous one, and the Russians, who were now in possession of the fortress, were able to maintain a strong position. The siege was continued for several days, and the Russians were able to capture the fortress. The capture of Abovka was a significant victory for the Russians, and it marked the beginning of the end of the Caucasian War. The Russians were able to capture the fortress, and they were able to maintain a strong position. The capture of Abovka was a significant victory for the Russians, and it marked the beginning of the end of the Caucasian War.



THE WAR IN THE CAUCASUS.

The followers of Schamil neither gave nor took quarter, and the Russians had to fight their way for six days up the valley, before they at length found themselves under the precipitous rocks of Achulko.—Page 430.



having, nevertheless, given the order to advance, Colonel Wrangel moved forward at the head of his 1500 picked soldiers, and reached the ledge, which was found to be about sixty yards long. Schamil waited silently till they were well upon it, and then opened a rifle-fire so destructive, that the men fell over the precipice by scores, the fall of one frequently dragging several others after him; and the rocks below were in a few minutes covered with dead bodies. Three times the frightful pass was obstinately essayed; till at length Colonel Wrangel, who was himself wounded, and had only fifty men remaining out of 1500, and two out of thirty-four officers, per force abandoned the mad attempt, and all hope of carrying Achulko by assault was given up."

Schamil, however, had a worse enemy to contend with than his Russian besiegers. Scarcely provisions enough for a single week could be gathered together, and General Grabbe soon learned that he had the brave garrison in his power. Assault was no longer attempted; but the place was closely invested, so that none could escape, nor could any supplies be introduced within the closely blockading lines. Nevertheless, nearly two months elapsed from the first sudden approach of the overwhelming Russian force to the actual surrender of the garrison. On one of the last days of the month of August, one of the garrison was seized while attempting to crawl past the Russian sentries. He was immediately brought into the presence of General Grabbe, and his appearance

abundantly confirmed the statement he made, that the last remains of food in Achulko had been consumed. He stated further, on being closely pressed by his captors, that Schamil Bey intended to make his escape that very night at a point which he indicated, accompanied by four chosen followers; and that as soon as his safety was secured the garrison would surrender. The strictest watch was accordingly ordered to be kept, and General Grabbe retired to his tent, leaving orders to call him at whatever hour of the night the renowned chief should be secured. The watch failed not to keep the requisite look-out on the spot indicated, and shortly before dawn the expected number of men were seen stealthily to let themselves down by a rope, and make their way towards the river. The whole were seized forthwith, and one of them, in the first moment of surprise, betrayed, as was thought unintentionally, that he was Schamil. General Grabbe was delighted at the completeness of his triumph, and gave good evidence of the barbarian system of warfare pursued by the Russians, by despatching one of his staff forthwith to bear to St. Petersburg the glorious tidings that the renowned Schamil Bey had been captured and immediately shot. While the favoured officer rode off with the joyful tidings, the captive mountaineer was led forth to execution. But at that moment the exulting general's attention was called to the proceedings of the garrison. Standing on the verge of the rocky steep, they shouted

"*Schamil! Schamil Mashallah!*" and waved their arms as they gazed in an opposite direction to that where the general's captive stood waiting the death-shot of the Russian muskets. With difficulty General Grabbe was at length compelled to believe that he had been effectually duped. The whole proceeding from first to last was a blind, to draw off the attention of the blockading force; and that once effected, the true Schamil was let down secretly, and getting on to a raft prepared in the river, he was speedily swept by its rapid current far beyond reach of pursuit.

The garrison of Achulko surrendered at discretion. The mud ramparts were demolished, and the huts of wattles burned, after which the outwitted general re-formed his diminished forces and returned down the valley; but already the presence of Schamil had sufficed to collect a numerous force to his standard, and the shouts of "*Schamil, Schamil Mashallah!*" again rang in the ears of the Russians as the bold chief swept down on their rear at the head of a large body of horse; while the rifles of the skilful mountaineers manning every available height, galled the retreating forces, and compelled them to quicken their march, to get beyond the deadly showers of bullets which thinned their ranks, without their being able to make any effectual resistance. This was another of the Russian victories which make so fine a figure in imperial bulletins!

It may readily be conceived what effect so bold an escape from the grasp of the Russians had on the

minds of Schamil's followers. All doubt of his being a special object of the favour and protection of Heaven was at an end. Hundreds flocked to his standard, and the whole tribes of the Caucasus revered his name as the signal and voucher of triumph over their foes. Schooled in the tactics of mountain warfare, and warned by experience of the danger of surprise or direct collision with the Russian forces, Schamil Bey carried on for the next four years a most harassing contest with the Russians. Watching his opportunity, he was constantly making some sudden and unexpected descent on the Russian posts; bursting suddenly on their forces when defiling through some mountain pass, cutting them off by hundreds with some well-disposed ambush of skilful riflemen, or dashing down on them at the head of his horsemen when unlooked for, and totally unprepared for resistance. By his skill in this system of guerilla warfare, it seemed to the Russians as if the renowned Schamil Bey were, in truth, supernaturally endowed, and actually ubiquitous. He appeared on a sudden on the Terek, cut off some unguarded body of the Russian forces; and before the remainder had recovered from their panic, they would hear of some similar disaster inflicted by him on the Kuban or Koisu stations. Now he would burst down on them in the Georgian borders, anon he was as suddenly seen in Daghestan; and before the formal military tacticians had time to draw together a force to oppose him, the mischief was done, and he had again disappeared.

Notwithstanding all the diplomatic skill with which despatches and bulletins were drawn up, it was difficult to convert such a succession of disasters into victories or successes—even on paper; and at length General Grabbe, the hero of Achulko, received his recall in disgrace. Something, it was apparent, must be done to retrieve the general's character, and redeem the credit of the army before he was superseded. This occurred in 1843. General Grabbe learned that the dreaded Schamil was in the mountains to the north-west of the scene of his former escape at Achulko, and that he had there mustered the Caucasian mountaineers in unusual force. The Russian general resolved for once to take the initiative, and strike such a blow as would amply suffice to wipe out all previous disgraces and defeats. In the shortest possible time he drew together a force of upwards of twenty thousand troops, and provided with the requisite artillery, he hastened by forced marches to the point indicated. For once he flattered himself that he had adopted means which would set at defiance the skill of the mountaineers and their hated leader. The opposition was feeble; villages and even strong positions were deserted with little or no struggle, and the riflemen, planted as usual on the heights and in the rocky recesses of the narrow valleys, seemed to content themselves with picking off the officers from the columns as they advanced through the mountain passes. Finding their progress so little impeded, General Grabbe

pushed on through the higher valley, till at length a lofty and nearly inaccessible mountain-barrier closing up the end of the valley, which was hemmed in in like manner on every side but that by which they had approached, disclosed to the Russians that they had been beguiled into the mountains for their own destruction. There was nothing for it but a hasty retreat. Now, however, Schamil's troops, which had scarcely shown themselves before, crowded every vantage ground, and thronged the mountain passes, pouring in their deadly shot on the discomfited foe. The disastrous retreat became at last little better than a rout. A large portion of the baggage, cannon, and ammunition, was left in the hands of the enemy; and after desperately fighting his way back again, General Grabbe reached his camp, having left upwards of five thousand of his troops dead or wounded in his retreat.

A curious incident in connection with this disastrous retreat is related by the author of an interesting narrative of the struggle in the Caucasus, published in Chambers's Repository of Instructive and Amusing Tracts:—"Intelligence," says he, "had reached the Russian commander-in-chief, which induced him to despatch Lieutenant-colonel Boutenieff with a battalion of infantry, a squadron of Cossacks, and a couple of light field-pieces, to intercept Abdullah, the Bey of Daghestan, on his way to Schamil with a large supply of much-needed arms and ammunition, escorted by about five hundred men only.

Boutenieff, a very zealous officer, marched with such speed, that he reached the spot in which he was to lie in ambush at about nine on the following morning—two hours before his prescribed time. Abdullah had also marched with unusual celerity, so that when the Russians halted he was not more than a verst (about a mile and a quarter) distant; and but for the timely warning of a scout, would have debouched in a few minutes from the hilly ground by which he was concealed into the valley lying between him and Boutenieff. As it was, the bey's position was nearly a desperate one—to retreat being almost as perilous as to advance, as he must necessarily be seen by whichever way he emerged from the ravine in which his men and the precious convoy they had in charge were for the moment screened. In this extremity, a Pole of the name of Kovinski, a deserter from the Russian army, in which, since the capitulation of Warsaw, he had been, with many thousand others of his countrymen, compelled to serve, ventured his life for the chance of striking a good blow at the destroyers of Polish nationality. Abdullah knew his man; and after a brief conference together, a paper was written and deposited with great apparent cunning within the lining of Kovinski's boot; and trusty messengers were sent off, by paths only traversible by accustomed and unencumbered mountaineers, to Schamil—a distance of about ten versts by the way they took, and perhaps half as much again by the ordinary road. A quarter of an hour


passed, and then Kovinski, who had accomplished a considerable *détour* unobserved, was seen galloping past the Russian ambush. To the challenge of the Cossack vedettes, he replied by setting spurs to his horse; but he was quickly overtaken, and brought before Boutenieff. He first said he was neither a Pole nor a deserter, but his tongue and the dress he wore were sufficient denial of that assertion; and the lieutenant-colonel informed him that his only chance of saving his neck from a speedy halter, was by rendering his old masters some essential service at the expense of his new friends. Kovinski sullenly replied, 'That he knew nothing of any importance, and could therefore reveal nothing.' These words were hardly spoken, when the men, who were searching his person and clothes, lit upon the concealed note, which, on being handed to the lieutenant-colonel, proved to be an obscurely-worded missive from Schamil himself to Abdullah, apparently reproaching him for his tardiness. There could be no further doubt of the prisoner's character and vocation; still the Pole continued obstinately dumb, and it was not till the rope was actually round his neck that his firmness yielded to the terror of immediate death, and the promises of Boutenieff not only of life, but freedom and reward, if by his means the Bey of Daghestan and his important convoy were captured. Kovinski, having reluctantly, as it seemed, consented to lead the Russian troops in the necessary direction, was placed in the centre of a clump of

Cossacks, and securely fastened upon a horse behind one of them, who were all very distinctly charged, in his hearing, to shoot or spear him upon the slightest indication of treachery. The troops then moved on, and were soon lost in the gorges of the mountains. They had been marching about three hours, and, according to Kovinski, were approaching Abdullah's encampment, when suddenly a shrill cry, like that of a bird of prey screaming overhead, was heard, echoed with the quickness of thought by thousands of others, and at the same moment a multitude of Schamil's horsemen, commanded by the Imâm himself, burst out of the clefts of the surrounding hills upon the Russians. Resistance was vain—flight, which was almost as desperate, was alone attempted; and a score of Cossacks, and some half-a-dozen mounted officers, most of them wounded, were all that made their way out of the tumultuous massacre that immediately ensued, to the Russian head-quarters. Kovinski was killed, but whether he had been slain by friend or foe in the fierce hurly-burly, could not be ascertained."

The Caucasian mountaineers were naturally not a little elated at their success; and the confidence with which it inspired them helped not a little to aid them in new enterprises, equally daring and successful. General Grabbe had to put the best face he could on the matter, and resign his command. General Neidhart, his successor, after following a nearly similar course, was in like manner recalled

in disgrace, and the command of the armies of the Caucasus was bestowed on the hero of Mr. Ditson's preface, "The bold and distinguished warrior, the accomplished diplomatist, the elegant courtier, and the intelligent and humane ruler," Prince Woronoff.

The Imperial government were resolved to spare no means to accomplish the end so long fruitlessly struggled for. Prince Woronoff was armed with absolute powers, alike as civil and military chief. Darga, the supposed stronghold of Schamil, in search of which General Grabbe had been decoyed into the scene of his disastrous rout, was still the grand prize to be aimed at, and this the Prince-General resolved should be his. His first step was a somewhat ominous one in its results. He despatched agents to Astrakhan, abundantly provided with every authority and means for securing an ample supply of all the requisites for the expedition he had planned. Week after week, however, passed away; and at length the painful truth slowly dawned on his reluctant mind, that his envoys, with their whole supply of Russian rubles, equivalent to a sum of £180,000 sterling, had fallen into the hands of the ever-watchful Schamil. There was nothing for it but a new demand on the treasury of St. Petersburg. This, however, the favourite general could venture on; and at length, in the month of June 1845, he marched at the head of a force of between thirty and forty thousand men—subsequently augmented, by the junction of General Freestag's forces, to fifty thousand



men—to the conquest of Darga. The approach was on this occasion more openly and resolutely defended; barricades, bodies of horsemen, crowds of riflemen manning the heights, and every means at the disposal of the hardy mountaineers, were employed to resist the invaders. Their progress was accomplished at a dreadful sacrifice of life; but it was indispensable for the reputation of the Prince Woronsoff that he should date the bulletin of his victory from the ramparts of Darga. Darga accordingly was reached; an assembly of some fifty rude huts, with an equally rude enclosure of birch-trees! Schamil now assumed the initiative. Encountering a section of the army entrusted with the bringing up of the stores and artillery, he so effectually routed them, that the small number who escaped were glad to abandon every portion of stores and artillery left in their charge. Prince Woronsoff now found his own position nearly desperate; and had it not been for the opportune arrival of General Freestag's division, unknown to the mountaineers, and through the treachery, as is believed, of two of their own number who had been taken prisoners and threatened with death, the Prince would most probably have only escaped destruction by laying down his arms. As it was, the retreat of the Russians more nearly resembled a total rout; and out of the fifty thousand who originally engaged in the enterprise, only twelve thousand could again be mustered at the close of their disgraceful flight.

These continued successes have helped to unite the whole tribes of the Caucasus, with a view to the most determined co-operation against the common foe; and meanwhile, along with the consciousness of defeat compelling him to inaction, the Russian Emperor has had his grasping ambition directed to other quarters, and he is once more renewing the long-cherished scheme of adding the ancient seat of the lower empire to the Russian kingdom, and converting himself into absolute autocrat and patriarch over the whole adherents of the Greek Church.

Such is the position of that vast and imposing, yet perhaps unsubstantial power which has risen on the foundations so wisely and sagaciously laid by Peter the Great. In some respects the phenomena which it presents are altogether remarkable, and without a parallel in ancient or modern times. Unlike Phœnicia, Greece, Macedonia, or Rome, its conquests and acquisition of territory have preceded its civilization; while in still more striking contrast to these ancient aggressive nations, the nations by whom it has been surrounded, and with whom it has chiefly come into collision, have been more advanced in civilization than itself. The Russian empire now comprises the whole northern portion of the eastern hemisphere, from the frontiers of Posen and the Gulf of Bothnia on the west, to the Pacific Ocean and Behring's Straits on the east—a region extending through Europe and Asia from the 18th to the 190th degrees of east longitude, being a distance on the

60th degree of latitude of nearly 6000 miles. Its area from north to south is also vast, extending in some parts from the 38th to the 78th degree of north latitude, and with an average breadth of about 1500 miles. Yet this does not satisfy Russia's grasping ambition. Georgia, Circassia, Turkey, and the Crimea, are the latest objects of desire, and no limits can be assigned to her theory of territorial acquisition. Nor does the vast geographical area above defined comprehend all that is included under the Imperial sway of the Russian autocrat. Russia claims, in addition, a very large tract in the north-west part of the continent of North America, with a long line of coast. She is mistress also of Nova Zembla, and several other large islands in the Arctic Ocean, of the Alentian Islands of Kamtschatka, and of the Aland and other islands in the Baltic. The superficial extent of these vast regions, thus united under one sceptre, have been roughly estimated thus: Russia in Europe, including Finland, 72,869 geographical square miles; Russian Asia, 275,767 square miles; and Russian America, 24,000 square miles; making the whole superficial extent of the Russian dominions amount to 372,636 geographical square miles.

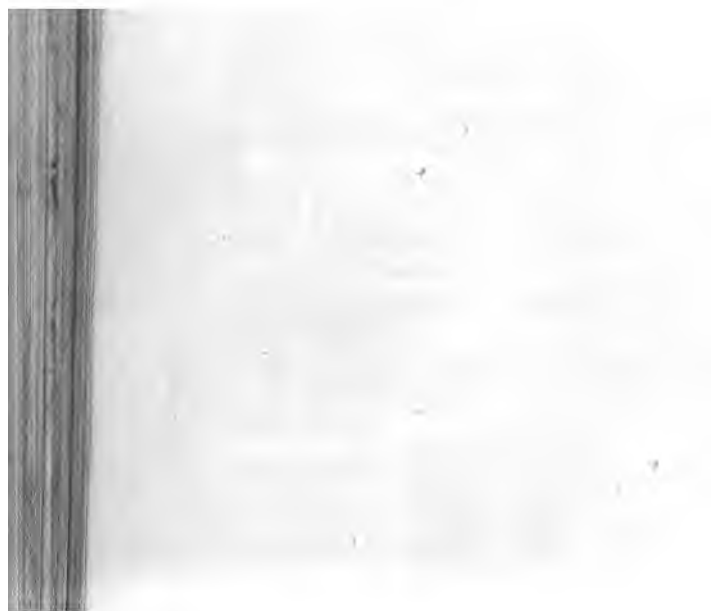
Unsatisfied with all this, Russia still goes on adding country to country and kingdom to kingdom. Constantinople appears now to be her great aim; but while by such means she may hope at length to close her European boundaries with the Mediterranean Sea,

there is no discoverable limits to the grasping of her ambition on the Asiatic continent, but such as the Indian Ocean may supply. There are definite limits, however, to such ambition. Already Russia embraces rival races. The elements of strife within her own bosom are being fostered by her blind policy, and it is not improbable that the acquisition of the long-coveted prize of Constantinople may yet prove only the initial step which shall lead to the dismemberment of this overgrown empire, and dissolve into its primitive elements an artificial system of political conjunction of races and kingdoms at variance alike with the laws of nature and all the highest interests of the human race.



THE END.







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